

The yacht Windswift is a Derek Kelsall designed Bayside 54 modified by the Glanville family who built both the hull and masts in 1979. The hull being a sandwich of glass and Airex foam. In place of the single aluminium mast as per the original design, Windswift has two rotating carbon fibre unstayed masts. Both are 60 foot high. The masts were designed and built by Richard Glanville in 1984 as lightweight replacements for the original glass fibre rotating unstayed masts that were fitted for her first owner in 1979.

Although we as owners of the yacht had complete confidence in the masts, crew and some of the local yachting fraternity were somewhat sceptical of the ability of these masts to survive a storm. As a result Windswift was entered into many of the long-distance races around Cape Town. The reader is reminded that the other name for this area is the Bay of Storms. Windswift is not a racing boat; she is a very comfortable cruising yacht that has confounded all her critics and performs better as the wind gets stronger. She's still remembered for her storming finish of the 1986 of Aughlas race. This race, arguably the toughest in South Africa, involves sailing not once but twice passed Cape Aughlas, the southernmost part of Africa. The finish is at the old British Naval base at Simon's Town on the Western side of False Bay. Windswift entered the bay from the East in a 40 knot south-easter. This increased to 50 knots gusting 55 as the middle of the bay was reached. Windswift, still with her two full main sails up, stormed up to the finishing line doing a steady ten knots and surging up to fifteen in the swells. Her crew were observed strolling up and down the deck, most with a celebratory beer in hand watching as they sailed past other yachts with two or three reefs and heeled over with a very wet crew sitting on the weather rail. Windswift won that race on handicap.

Windswift has proven herself and her masts many times over. She has completed six Aughlas races. She has also taken part in twelve Double Cape races. This race involves sealing twice round Cape Point at the bottom of the Cape Peninsula. Local skippers are very aware that if the wind gets up about 30 knots, if they look around and they are almost sure to see Windswift "going like a Boeing". To complete her history Windswift entered the Cape Town to Rio de Janeiro race in 1983 taking 28 days. After several weeks in and around Rio she sailed back to Africa only to be greeted by a 50 knot plus gale some 24 hours from home.

Since installation Windswift's masts have required no repairs apart from replacing the original masthead pulleys (plastic, on a stainless steel shaft) with new pulleys fitted with sealed bearings. The masts were removed in 1995 to check that the bearings for wear and repaint the masts. There was no significant wear and the bearings were simply cleaned re-greased and replaced.

Our crew now have complete faith in the ability of our masts to survive in any condition. They have sailed some 20,000 miles, completed 50 races and over the last sixteen years withstood countless squalls while on the Marina, including several where the wind exceeded 80 knots and two where 100 knots were recorded. It is with great interest that we are only now seeing racing yachts being constructed with unstayed carbon masts and only a few rotating wingmasts. Richard Glanville produced unstayed rotating wingmasts for Windswift 21 years ago and Windswift is still sailing, entering races and ready to go..

Our family has therefore known Richard for over eighteen years; we have the highest respect for his masts and his knowledge of carbon fibre. It may also be of interest to the reader that at the same time as Windsift's masts were being constructed, the Glanville family were sailing a boat called WesBank. This yacht was some 73 ft LOA is the only vessel I know of which had a carbon fibre backstay to replace the conventional stainless steel wire rope. This resulted in a massive saving of weight. If Richard has designed and built a carbon fibre mast I would not hesitate to recommend it. More recently I personally have been involved with two yachts entered in the last Around Alone race in 1998/99 and have asked Richard for advice and carbon fibre related problems on both these yachts.

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