

## **JEREMY LINES**

### **Some personal memories from his friends**

#### **From Ian Nicolson:**

Jeremy was a truly great yacht designer, developer, owners' friend like no other, hard worker - ask his widow Claire, he sometimes worked till 2300 hrs and was back in the office early next morning. In many ways he was like a hero in a hard-to-believe novel. I never knew him upset or angry or baffled by a technical problem. Though he wrote no letters after his name, he was a life member of the Royal Institute of Naval Architects.

When I got married in 1959 he was my best man. We sailed together a great deal.

I cannot think of anyone in the boat industry even slightly like him.

#### **These are some of my reminiscences of Jerry over the years:**

Jeremy and I...he was Jerry to me since I met him in 1947.... were apprenticed together. I started in 1945 and he joined the Dorset Yacht Company in Poole in 1947, after leaving school the same year. This firm employed about 60 people and was a notable British yacht builder at the time, having spent the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War making small warships such as Motor Torpedo Boats, and repairing landing craft damaged at D-Day. The manager was Fred Parker, one of the leading British yacht designers.

Jerry was seconded to a shipwright charge hand called Bert Beech and they were building a 41 foot ketch. In many ways boat building in 1947 was more difficult than during the war, because everything was in short supply, whereas during the war the authorities sent what was needed to the boatyards, everything from engines to shackles. The 41 footer had an unusual steering gear and no one in the yard was familiar with its quirks. Bert and Jerry struggled for days to get it assembled in the awkward spaces under the side-decks and in the tiny lazerette. Meanwhile rumours swirled round the yard that, due to these delays, the profit on the yacht was melting fast. By a coincidence, the managing director, Tommy Culpan, decided to see what was going on right through the yard and a procession was formed, rather like a captain's weekly inspection on a warship. Tommy led, followed by Fred Parker, then the senior foreman, next the engineer foreman, the chief painter, the bosun, and so on down to the senior apprentice. He was the only other apprentice, apart from Jerry, which made him the senior, but he was, like most apprentices, just a general dogsbody, doing things no one else wanted to do.

As the "management team" in line ahead approached the 41 footer, Bert Beech's head appeared above the cockpit coaming. He was dishevelled, his hair awry, he was sweating but in spite of this he looked triumphant. "Have you finished that [expletive] steering gear installation?" Tommy asked. "YES Sir!" was the cheerful reply. "Turn the wheel to

starboard,” said Tommy. There was a brief pause then he shouted: “To STARBOARD I said”, as everyone in the procession watched the rudder go to port. That was probably the only time Jerry was involved in a boat-building mistake.

Like all apprentices Jerry was hard up but he found a low-cost sailing dinghy and bought it. She was Una rigged, that is to say she had her mast well forward and just a mainsail, no jib. This was why she was cheap, but she was hard to handle in heavy weather. Also that vintage of National 12s, of which it was one, did not know the meaning of stability. One Saturday, Jerry went out in her with Bert crewing. They capsized and had a tough time righting the boat, then getting back on board. They sailed it back to the boatyard, getting colder by the minute. When they arrived they were nearing hypothermia, and shivering heavily, water still streaming out of their clothes. Jerry was never dismayed by anything and was back sailing the next day.

Jerry would sail anything anywhere and for one holiday crewed in a 48 year old cutter which was feeling her age and leaking more than was convenient through both the planking and deck as so many yachts did back then. This did not disconcert Jerry and he introduced the crew to the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, all of which he knew and sang well.

The yacht was running up the River Dart and it was time to stop before hitting something solid. It was decided to lower the sails and round up, before dropping the anchor. The mainsail jammed, half down. Jerry knew immediately what was wrong. He grabbed the correct size of screw-driver from the copious tool kit, and shinned up the mast. There was no time for bosun’s chairs or such-like. A screw was loose in the mainsail track so the slides were stuck above it. Jerry had the screw out in a few seconds and the mainsail fully down. Plenty of people would have put the screw right in, but Jerry was a seaman and boat builder of exceptional understanding and he knew the same screw would soon come out again so he put it in his pocket.

When his apprenticeship was finished Jerry did his National Service in the R.A.F. then went to Universal Shipyard on the East bank of the river Hamble as one of the managers. He joined Camper & Nicholsons and was deeply involved in the building of all the Nicholson range of fibreglass yachts. He took a strong interest in improving the Nicholson 32 class, one of the all-time great cruisers. Jerry was responsible for making 550 improvements between the Mark I and the Mark VI. This is believed to be a world record and typical of Jerry’s meticulous approach to designing, building and improving yachts.

The matter of the engine casings on open launches was another typical Jerry enterprise. He was involved in the construction of a classic undecked launch, and like all its type the engine was amidships inside a wood box. This casing had a row of one-inch diameter holes along the top at each side. These holes were to let cold air in to prevent the engine over-heating, also to feed air to the engine inlet manifold. Jerry knew that the size of the hole was decided by the biggest drill bit in any shipwright’s kit. It occurred to him that this size might not be efficient, and could be dangerously small. Just because one inch had been the standard size since engines were put in boats, did not mean it was the correct dimension. He got hold of some smoke candles and did experiments. It was immediately clear that the holes should be 2 inches in diameter or larger.

When Jerry left Campers he went out to the Far East to manage the completion of three large sailing yachts. The locals building them were the ancestors of boat builders back in the mists of far gone ages. They had no trouble putting together wood vessels which even today we would agree were large for yachts. The problems concerned such modern gadgets as engines, generators, hydraulic steering, electrics and electronics. Jerry had to design all these, as well as source them, and explain to the locals how they were to be fitted. There was then the small problem of launching these three monsters. They were about a kilometre from the shore. In Europe or America two large cranes would have been hired, also a multi-wheel trailer and two tractors, one pushing and one pulling the trailer. Once the boat was on the trailer it would be gently eased to the nearest quay where the two cranes would lift the boat into the water. There were no cranes and no tractors and the locals did not know what a multi-wheel trailer was. Jerry always had so much charm and was so affable. He had no trouble getting logs cut and rounded to make massive rollers. Then local villagers were invited to a party which involved hauling on ropes attached to the boat's bow. With much laughter and a lot of hard hauling the first boat was got down to the sea, where she floated off at high tide. Later the second and third were also put afloat, completed and commissioned.

One of Jerry's greatest achievements, and there were many, was the designing and commissioning of *Diligent II*. This gaff ketch was nearly 50 foot long and she had a shallow draught as she was kept by her owner Mark Varvill in Chichester harbour. She was chartered for the Anniversary Regatta in 2001 which was run by the Royal Yacht Squadron, and Jerry was sailing master. She has nine sails as both the main and mizzen have jack-yard topsails. Though there were thirteen people on board, it took 90 minutes to set all sail, as she had no winches, so everything was done with multiple blocks and tackles. Also no one apart from Jerry had ever set a topsail, let alone a jack-yarder. One complication with this sail is deciding before setting it which side is the luff and which the leech as they are so often nearly identical.

The yacht was a success in the regatta, but she was still being commissioned so no one was unduly surprised when the jib topsail jammed aloft in an early race. The wind was getting up so this sail had to be lowered. However, when the halyard was freed the sail showed no sign of sliding down its forestay. Jerry was quickly out on the bowsprit fore end, followed by the two of his contemporaries, 'creakies' of his generation, whom he had recruited to help him win the races. The rest of the crew, young enough to be their grandchildren, stayed well aft out of harm's way.....and safe from the waves breaking over the bowsprit. The oldies struggled but still the sail refused to come down, then one of them said "There's about 220 years of experience on this bowsprit so this damned sail has got to come down!". Which it did, with a rush, enveloping the ancient mariners on the bowsprit. It was just as well that Jerry had designed the yacht because plenty of bowsprits would not have withstood the weight and struggles on that slim spar.

In the Round the Island Race in the same regatta, the helmsman gybed at the Needles before the hand on the mizzen sheet was ready. As a result, a mizzen cross-tree was broken. Jerry, aged 71 at the time, swiftly climbed the mast without any assistance, using the mast hoops as handholds and footholds. He freed off the two parts of the broken cross-tree and brought them down to the deck. As he had commissioned the yacht there was a full set of spare on board. He broke out the epoxy resin and glued the two parts together, then fished them. To

speed up the setting of the glue he lit the oven in the galley and gently cooked the cross-tree. Being Jerry he knew how long to use the heat. Then he climbed back up the mizzen mast without any sissy nonsense such as a bosun's chair and re-fixed the cross-tree so the yacht crossed the finishing line fully repaired.

When the Association of Yachting Historians was formed Jerry was a founder and committee member. One titanic task he took on for the Association, with Theo Rye, was to digitise the whole of Lloyd's Register of Yachts. This multi-page tome was published from 1877 to 1980 and just getting an intact copy of each year was a triumph. It was not possible to digitise without separating every page, so each of the books used for the job had to be gently dismantled, put through the digitiser, then re-bound. The finished reassembled books were in several respects better than the originals. As a result of this considerable job, it is now easy to look up the details of the great majority of yachts built up to 1980.

Another enormous task Jerry set for himself was to make a complete list of all the half models of yachts. This entailed contacting yacht clubs all over the world and getting the dimensions of the models, the name and basic details of the yachts portrayed, and so on.

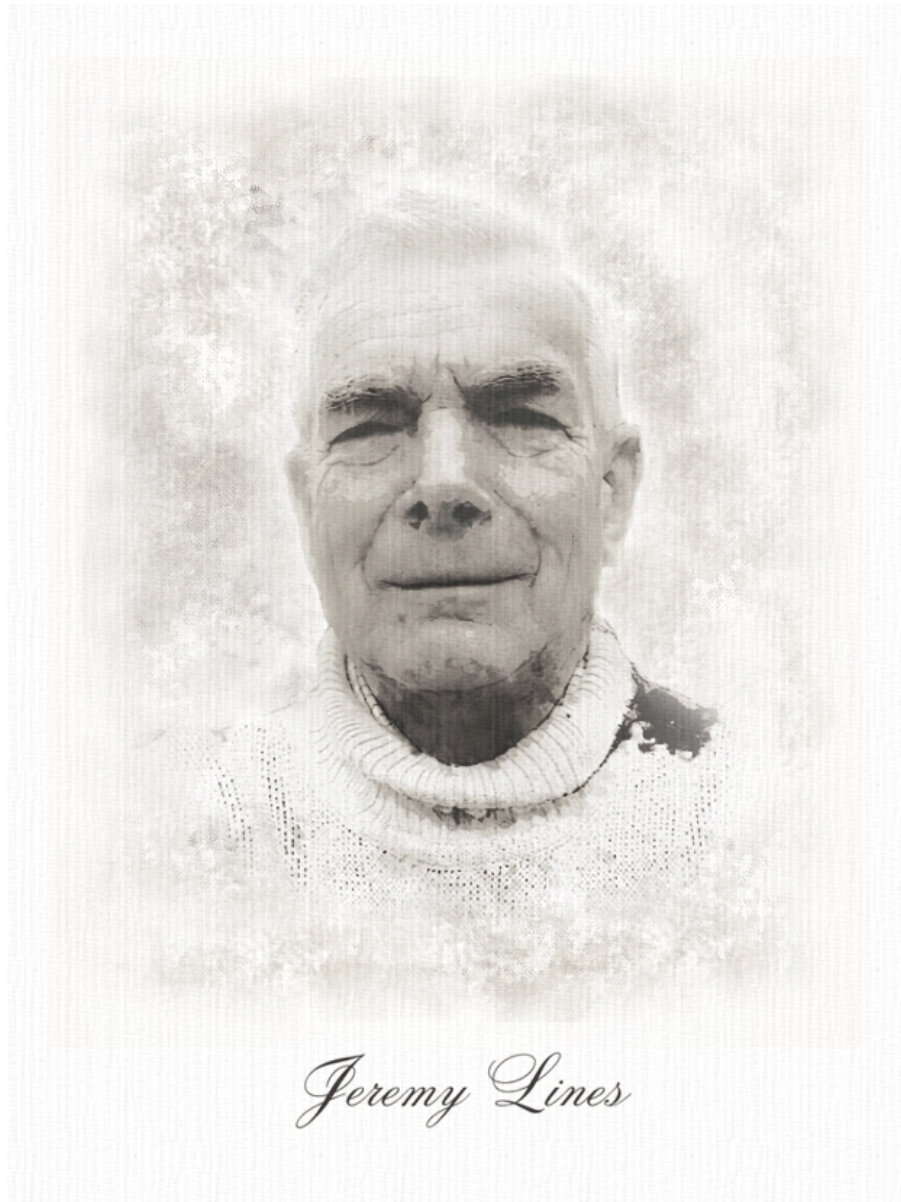
Meanwhile he went on sail-boarding almost to his death. There's more! So that he could explore the upper reaches of the rivers and harbours round the Solent he built a rowing skiff at an age when his contemporaries had long ago given up even thinking about holding an oar. In addition, every weekend during the summer, also at mid-week, he was Race Officer at the Stokes Bay Sailing Club. He had the energy and enthusiasm of a man one third his age.

Jerry took an interest in every kind of technology. On one occasion when a new car was needed, and the move was towards diesels, Jerry thought that he might end up with a vehicle which was unpleasantly noisy. He had spent many hours working on the sound-proofing of each of the classes of yachts produced by Campers. He got hold of a device for measuring noise levels and went round the local car sales rooms testing all the different makes. During each test drive the sound level recorder was sitting on the passenger seat beside him.

It is not accurate to say that Jerry had a lot of friends. The truth is everyone was his friend, and the number of people he helped was vast. One night in those remote hours which only people who sail overnight know how grim they are, he was sound asleep when the 'phone rang. The American at the other end of the 'phone mentioned his name, and Jerry immediately said, "Great to hear from you. You bought....." And here Jerry mentioned the boat's name and type of Camper & Nicholsons yacht this Yank had bought, as well as the year and month of the commissioning. The voice at the other end of the 'phone said, "We have a little problem. We are in the Caribbean..." Here followed technical details about the exact location. Then "We have just been dismasted in a rather rough squall. The mast was cut free and sank, but we have a full fuel tank so we can make harbour." Jerry replied, "Go to So-and-So at..." and here followed the precise location of a local mast-maker. Jerry went on, "Ask for a spar which has the following technical specification..." which Jerry gave from memory, at 3.00 in the morning, a few seconds after coming awake.

Jerry was a remarkable person admired and greatly loved by the whole yachting world. He leaves Claire, his wife of 55 years, as well as three sons, Ian, Peter and Robert, also a clutch of grandchildren.

**From Carlos Ariel Solari, Lago Nahuel Huapi, República Argentina:**



**Original watercolour painting of Jeremy by Carlos Ariel Solari**

Jeremy made an excellent impression on me, not only because of his extraordinary predisposition and friendship, but also because of the enormous passion for his work and the satisfaction he conveyed to me when he told me all the work they were doing in the Association. Here, to personalities like Jeremy we say "**Un Maestro**" (A Master).

A happy causality meant that when I made a query from Lago Nahuel Huapi in Argentina to the Camper & Nicholsons shipyard four years ago, they put me in touch with "El Maestro" Jeremy Lines.

When I finished my research, I was convinced that without the experience, meticulousness, generosity and especially the wisdom of Jeremy, I would not have achieved it.

I am a recently retired merchant marine officer, sports navigator and amateur researcher of the history of navigation on Lake Nahuel Huapi.

In these last years, every new license or investigation was a new excuse to communicate with Jeremy. It was a pleasure for me, and in some mails, more personal things of our life as navigators began to intermingle. Honestly, I cannot say that I knew him in depth. But, in any case, I can say that, from what I did know of him, he was an extraordinary professional.

Despite my limited English, I have been able to distinguish and feel how my mariner spirit came into resonance with a true British sailor and a good human being. Surely, for many Jeremy will be a "lighthouse".

From here, Jeremy will also be missed.

"Buenos vientos, Amigo"

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## **Celebration of the Life of Jeremy Lines**

**Held at Stokes Bay Sailing Club, Gosport, Hampshire, on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2019**

In early May nearly a hundred old friends and colleagues of Jeremy Lines gathered with his widow Claire and other members of his family at Jeremy's local sailing club, the Stokes Bay SC in Gosport, to celebrate his life and work and to share memories of this remarkable and unassuming man, who was a founder member of the Association of Yachting Historians.

Guests were welcomed to the Club by the Commodore, Grace Clark, and Claire, together with Jeremy's son Ian. The family had produced a memorial pamphlet containing personal memories of Jeremy from colleagues and friends, and with a photo of a relaxed and smiling Jeremy gracing the cover. There was also a fascinating series of images from his life and work, both family photos from an early age and a small selection of the many models from his collection, screened by a projector onto one of the walls of the Club, for all to enjoy during the event.

Speeches were made by several of the guests, each warmly remembering Jeremy's amazing contribution to the yachting and boating world. Hal Sisk, AYH Chairman, spoke of Jeremy's enthusiasm and dedication to the work of the Association, including endless hours painstakingly checking the page proofs of the whole of Lloyd's Register of Yachts now digitised onto a data stick. Peter Nicholson, Chairman of Camper & Nicholsons, praised Jeremy's design skills within the company and his dedication to the preservation of its archives. Peter Eddis, a longstanding friend of Jeremy's and owner of a Nicholson 32, spoke of Jeremy's enthusiasm about his time at C and N and his invaluable digitisation of the C and N drawings. He mentioned, too, Jeremy's popularity with, and support for, Stokes Bay Sailing Club members. Then Rosemary Joy of the AYH read out a moving letter from George Hogg, an AYH member and also from the National Maritime Museum Cornwall in Falmouth. Finally, Claire was invited to say a few words, which she did with great charm and courage.

It was altogether a very relaxed and happy occasion, catered for very efficiently by the Club, and one which we are sure Jeremy himself would have much appreciated.