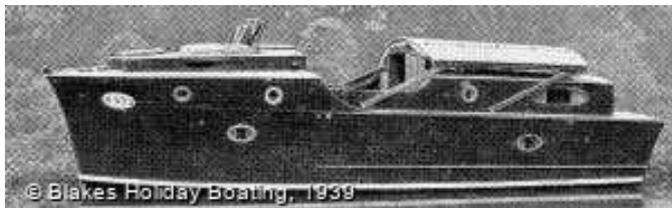


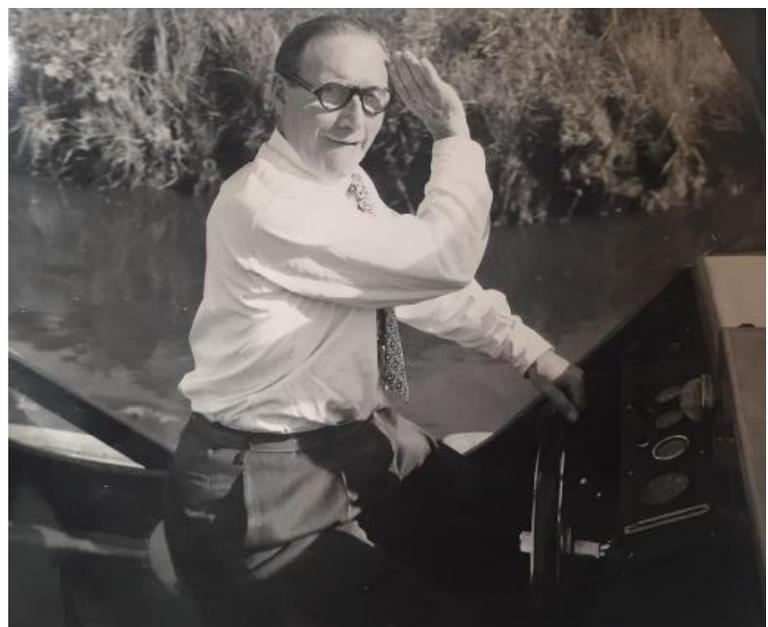
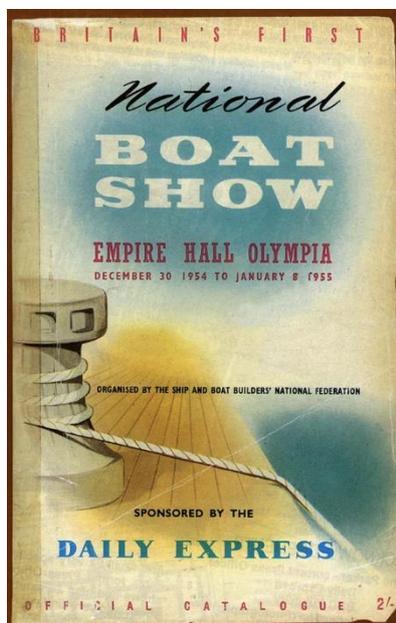
100 YEARS OF WINDBOATS

2020 marks the centenary year of the Windboats name in Norfolk, a boatyard with a rich and interesting history. It was established in 1920 by Graham Bunn – a master craftsman and yacht designer. Graham was the son of another master boatbuilder who built boats near Wroxham in the late 1800's and from whom he learnt his skills.

Initially building small wooden yachts and larger power boats, the yard developed an early reputation for excellence in boatbuilding and produced one of the finest hire fleets in Broadland. The hire fleet became known as "the Windboats" due to the inclusion of "wind" into all the hire boat class names, for example Finewind, Fairwind, Southwind, Merrywind and so on.



Changing times and demand for larger vessels meant a change of premises so the yard moved in 1932 to Wroxham. In 1945 the yard was purchased by Donald Hagenbach, and a more modern design of hire fleet boats were developed and subsequently exhibited at the inaugural London Boat Show at Olympia in 1955, which led to a 44ft motor yacht being built for the world famous English comedian and actor Arthur Askey CBE, renown for one of his many catchphrases 'I thank you' (*pronounced 'Ay-Thang-Yaw'*).



Donald Hagenbach led Windboats to be one of the founder members of the Ship & Boatbuilders National Federation (*now British Marine*), and later became its President. The business diversified into building aluminium boats in 1957, one of which was commissioned by Prince Rainier of Monaco, and soon after started using ferro cement construction under the trade name Seacrete which was awarded the Lloyds 100A1 certificate.

Windboats ceased to operate its hire fleet in 1969, completing a 50yr involvement with Blakes Holidays on the Norfolk Broads, deciding instead to concentrate on building pleasure and commercial craft, the largest of which was the 68ft twin-screw wooden motor-yacht 'Yvancha', later renamed 'Dreaming Star', and extended to 78ft, powered by two Rolls Royce 200hp engines and is still going strong to this day under her new name 'Amanda'.



In 1974, the business changed hands for the third time when Donald Hagenbach retired and Windboats' own Production Director and Naval Architect, Trevor James, purchased the business. One of his many designs was the 65ft research trawler built for the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific. The vessel sailed the 15,000nm on her own bottom and was handed over to the Solomon Islands Government by HM Queen Elizabeth II in 1976.

The company continued building and fitting-out Seacrete vessels for both pleasure and commercial use, including the well-known range of Endurance yachts alongside some of the Nelson motorboats. In 1983 the company moved into GRP yacht production with the start of a 30-year association with Oyster Marine, one of the world's top marques in luxury sailing yachts, building nearly 300 of the Oyster range from 35-72ft.



Trevor's son, Oliver James BSc, joined the company in 1995 after successfully finishing his degree in Environmental Science at the University of Plymouth and quickly took over the daily operation of the yard, becoming a Director in 2000 and Managing Director in 2010.

Trevor James meeting Queen Elizabeth II in 1977 when she came to open the Norfolk Naturalists Trust Centre at Ranworth Broad for which Windboats had built the Seacrete pontoons. Sadly, Trevor passed away in September 2014, but Oliver now continues to grow the business with his mother Yvonne as Chairlady.



Oyster's founder, Richard Matthews, sold his company in 2008 and a few years later the new owners made the decision to bring the production of Oyster yachts in-house, so after 30 years of building Oysters, Windboats diversified once again and in 2013 the company acquired the well-known and highly respected Norfolk motorboat builder Hardy Marine from Len Funnell, who had stepped-in to run the business after the sudden passing of his son Mark at the early age of 49, a huge loss for the family, friends and staff. Transferring the skills and knowledge of the Hardy team into the Windboats pool to continue the heritage.

The company was founded by John Hardy in 1976 and initially built small motor-sailors designed by Colin Mudie. High demand led to the build-facility in North Walsham being expanded to its current size in 1982. In these early years a large number of small motorboats were built, with the brand being expanded in the early 80s to include the Seawings range, and now well over 4000 boats are afloat worldwide.

The Andrew Wolstenholme designed semi-displacement Hardy 36 was introduced in 1997, followed by the Commander 32 and Commodore 42 a few years later. Building on the reputation these yachts generated, the Hardy 50 hit the market in 2004 and the first Hardy 62, was completed in 2013.

A range of models from 32-62ft renowned for their sea-keeping ability and quality of build, endorsed by the RNLI who commissioned two of the Hardy 42's as their crew training vessels, and Raymarine who commissioned a Hardy 36 as their primary test boat who later came back for a 42 which is still in daily operation today with over 7000 engine hours!



RNLI's Hardy 42 'Robert S Ellsmoor' on a crew training exercise



Raymarine's Hardy 42 'Raymariner' fully loaded with test equipment





In 2014 Windboats expanded the range to include the Hardy 40DS, a more contemporary next generation design and the Hardy 62 was developed into the award-winning Hardy 65 luxury explorer yacht.



The same year saw the 40th anniversary of ownership of the business by the James family and the start of a new partnership with luxury British yacht brand, Gunfleet Marine, which was founded by family friend Richard Matthews after he had sold Oyster Marine. Knowing the quality of craftsmanship from Windboats, Richard entrusted the yard to take over the Gunfleet brand who now market, sell and build the Gunfleet range under licence from him.

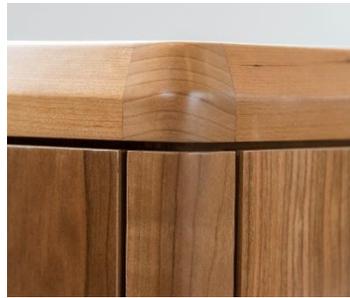


In 2018 the Wroxham yard was merged into the larger facility at North Walsham where the Hardy motor yachts are built, offering more space and more efficient production of the Hardy & Gunfleet range, allowing the whole team to operate more coherently, many of whom have been with the company for over 20 years, with some starting on the Youth Training Scheme 35 years ago and are now in management positions.

2020 will see the company moving forward with the modern times and the introduction of hybrid options for the Hardy range, offering clients the ability to silently cruise with zero emission, whilst still having a powerful diesel engine for offshore passages in challenging weather conditions. It will also see the launch of the latest model to join the range, the Hardy 52DS.



Craftsmanship Gallery





Top: Build facility in North Walsham Bottom: Sales team at international boat shows

2020 is the 46th year of ownership by the James family of this 100-year-old company, and as soon as the current pandemic restrictions are eased the whole team at Windboats look forward to carrying on the tradition of building yachts to the highest standards and flying the flag for British boatbuilding.



WINDBOATS

LUXURY YACHT BUILDERS