

Fred Cooper

Isle of Wight County Press – 18 March 1933

NEWPORT

NEWPORT MARINE ARCHITECT APPOINTMENT. - Mr. Fred Cooper, M.I.N.A., a native of Newport, who has won a high reputation as a designer of motor craft for high speed and day cruising – he was responsible for Lord Wakefield’s famous Miss England II, in which the late Sir Henry Seagrave created a world’s record speed – has been appointed designer and works manager to Messrs. Vosper and Co., of Portsmouth.

Isle of Wight County Press – 15 January 1972

BRADING.

Marine Architect – The funeral took place on Monday at Carisbrooke Cemetery, of Mr. Fred Cooper, C.Eng., F.R.I.N.A., M.I.Mar.E., of Beechgrove, who died at St. Mary’s Hospital, Newport on Wednesday week. A member of a well-known Newport family, Mr. Cooper was educated at Portland House Academy, and served as a sub-lieutenant, R.N.V.R., in the 1914-18 war. He was associated with the firm of S. E. Saunders, Ltd. (forerunners of Messrs. Saunders-Roe) in the design of fast motor boats including the recording breaking Miss England I and II. He was engaged on Admiralty work during the last war. The Rev. P. W. F. Erith, of Calbourne, officiated at the service at Carisbrooke. The mourners were Mrs. Cooper (widow), Mr. G. Cooper (brother), Mesdames V. Glasse, E. Minchin and G. Cooper (sisters-in-law), Mr. P. Minchin (nephew) and Mr. W. S. Warne (cousins). Messrs. H. and F. Damp made the arrangements.

From Motor Boat Monthly – <https://www.mby.com/motor-boat-news-boat-reviews-pictures-and-videos/archive/miss-england-exclusive-interview-23943>

MBM catches up with the great nephew of Fred Cooper who designed Miss England's hull

To coincide with our Miss England feature in our May 2011 issue, MBM caught up with Bill Cooper, great nephew of the famous Fred Cooper, to find out more about the man behind Miss England’s hull.

Bill Cooper says:

“Fred was one of three brothers who were the sons of a successful Stonemason on the Isle of Wight. Fred became a naval architect and hull designer whilst Frank (my grandfather) ran the stonemasons business with George, the other brother, a sculptor and artist. Fred came from a family of skilled men and I believe this explains his outstanding ability with hull design.

Family ties

As a child, my mother discouraged me from having anything to do with the Cooper family as my father was from “a bad lot” (he left us when I was two). This was a great shame as by the time I was of an age to make up my own mind the opportunity to get to know Fred had passed and as a young engineer myself that lost opportunity has always been a source of regret to me as I could have

learned a lot from him. My own interest in Fred was rekindled when I was given a copy of Adrian Rance's book *Fast Boats and Flying Boats* and the author was kind enough to put me in touch with the now defunct Motor Boat Museum at Basildon. Visiting Basildon was an eye-opener and this led to me crewing safety boats for the World Water Speed Record Attempts at Windermere and later Coniston. I also joined the Classic Motor Boat Association and bought my own small classic powerboat, a 1968 Delta built by Ray Wright, which I still use and enjoy.

Fred's career

As well as designing the hull for Miss England and Miss England II, it was Fred who introduced Major Segrave to Michael Willcocks who became his riding mechanic. Segrave died on 13 June 1930 in a tragic accident on Lake Windermere while trying to break the World Water Speed Record aboard Miss England II. Willcocks, who was on board at the time, survived badly injured with a fractured spine but he recovered and went on to race again. Fred went on designing boats, including designing the first in the series of Bluebird boats known as K3 for Sir Malcolm Campbell, but I believe Fred lost much of his enthusiasm on that sad day at Windermere. K3 was designed by Fred and built at Saunders Roe, East Cowes, and broke the World Speed Record on 2 September 1937 at Lake Maggiore, Italy, with a speed of 126.33 mph and again the following year at Lake Halwyl, Switzerland, at a speed of 130.9mph with Sir Malcolm Campbell at the helm.

Previous to his involvement in the design of Miss England with Hubert Scott-Pain at the British Power Boat Company, Fred designed a small, fast, stepped hull named Basileus for Jack King, which was built at Snooks yard in Bursledon, near Southampton, in the late 1920s. It was a very pretty little boat, which, despite its small scale, was at the forefront of hull design. In 1932 Jack King lent Basileus to Willcocks who raced her in the Bann 100 in Ireland. Willcocks came third despite running out of fuel – an outstanding achievement given that Basileus was fitted with only a 350cc Johnson outboard. At well under 5ft tall Willcocks was a true enthusiast with a lot of courage who carried on racing after suffering a broken spine in the accident with Miss England II. Fred Cooper was a prolific and talented designer who has never really been given the recognition that he deserved."



Miss England II on Lake Windermere where Sir Henry Segrave achieved a Water Speed record of 98.76 mph on 13 June 1930 and died when the boat capsized at speed having hit some flotsam on the second run.



Miss England II shown in Italy – after she capsized on Lake Windermere in 1930, Miss England II was recovered, repaired and in 1931 taken to Lake Garda, Italy to make a new attempt on the Water Speed record by Kaye Don. A new record of 110.28 mph was achieved on 9 July 1931.

Additional notes

From *“Race Against the Odds: The Tragic Success Story of ‘Miss England II’”* by Kevin Desmond

Fred spent much of WW1 in the Dardanelles as a sub-lieutenant in the Royal Naval Voluntary Reserve. After the war, Fred served an apprenticeship with Thornycrofts at Basingstoke and then moved to S.E. Saunders Ltd. at East Cowes where he learnt boatbuilding design and construction.

One of his first race-boats (1920's) was 'Newg', a single step hydroplane built by Sam Saunders for millionaires Marion 'Joe' Carstairs.



Other notes:

1932 Berania, a 57ft Motor Yacht designed by Fred and built for Marion Barbara Carstairs, aka Joe Carstairs at her own boatbuilding yard, the Sylvia Yard, on the Medina in East Cowes..

In 1936 Groves and Guttridge built a 36ft twin express cruiser, Avril, designed by Fred Cooper for Mr. C. H. Kearley, of London. (IWCP 11 April 1936)

In 1937 Fred designed the High Speed Launch (HSL 102) built by British Power Boat Company which were used during WW2 to rescue downed airman - <http://www.bmpt.org.uk/pdfs/HSL102-InfoSheet.pdf>

In the 1950's Fred designed a 19ft fast-launch for a Captain Jessel which was built by H. Attrill & Sons of St Helens, the craft was such a success that six were built by Attrill's.

Fred and Attrill's were also involved (1950/60's) with the design and construction of the hull mould of the Dowty Jet Turbocraft which used a Dowty-Hamilton water jet propulsion unit.

From Lloyds Register of Yacht - * 1931, # 1962

- Advance - 40ft, 15 ton - wooden Motor Yacht – 1930 – Vosper & Co., Portsmouth *
- Berania - 57.5ft, 37 ton - wooden twin screw Motor Yacht -1932 – Sylvia Yard, East Cowes – Betty Carstairs *
- Callmesir - 39.5ft, 15 ton - wooden twin screw Motor Yacht - 1931 – Berthon Boat Co., Lymington *
- Dreamtoo - 34.8ft, 11 ton - twin screw, 1936 – Southampton Launch & Boat Co. #
- Flying Fish - 55.5ft, 33 ton - wooden twin screw Motor Yacht -1934 – Vosper & Co., Portsmouth *#
- Genevieve - 22ft, 6 ton - wooden sloop – 1906 – J & W Lyons, Freemantle *
- Janica - 28.5ft, 9.42 ton – single screw – 1948 – Eanalah Yacht Yard, Fishborne – ex Maid Marietta #
- Jenifer III - 23.9ft, 5 ton - single screw – 1952 – Cornubia Yacht Yard, East Cowes #
- Khamsa - 37,25ft, 19 ton - single screw – 1938 – Grove and Guttridge, East Cowes #
- Mongoose - 39.5ft, 15 ton - wooden twin screw Motor Yacht - 1931 – Berthon Boat Co., Lymington *
- Nomad III - 31ft, 7 ton - wooden Motor Yacht – 1931 – James, Taylor & Bates, Chertsey *
- Tai-Wo/Tai Wo - 27.5ft, 8.35 ton - Twin screw – 1939 - Southampton Launch & Boat Co. #

The following list from <http://87.106.22.33/iframe/yachtdesigns.php> reflect the craft in that database which list Fred as the designer and which are not obviously identified above:

Craft Name	Type of craft	Class/size	Magazine	Year/Month	Page
Lady Betty	Catboat	20 ft LOA	Yachting Monthly	1921/01	207
Express cruiser de lux	Yacht, motor	39 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1930/02	128
Crusader	Motor	39 ft	Yachting Monthly	1930/04	457
Crusader series	Motor	30 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1930/08	172
Fast cruiser	Motor	31 ft	Yachting World	1931/01	89
35 ft cruiser	Motor	35 ft	Yachting World	1931/02	195
	Motor	45 ft Vosper	Yachting Monthly	1931/04	452
Silver Star	Motor	45 ft	Yachting World	1931/07	128
All-purpose dinghy	Dinghy, sailing	13 ft	Yachting World	1932/02	166
Outboard Dinghy	Dinghy, sailing	12 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1932/04	357
Mercury	Motor	18 ft	Yachting World	1932/07	31
Fast runabout	Motor	30 ft	Yachting World	1932/11	435
Fishing cruiser	Motor	27 ft	Yachting World	1933/01	43
	Yacht	50 ft LOA	The Yachtsman	1935/04	21
36-footer	Motor	36 ft	Yachting World	1936/02	176
	Motor	36 ft LOA	Yachting World	1936/03	257
Danish cruiser	Yacht, motor	35 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1938/12	589
Express cruiser	Motor	35 ft	Yachting World	1938/12	606

Craft Name	Type of craft	Class/size	Magazine	Year/Month	Page
Anna Marie	Motor	24 ft	Yachting World	1939/01	26
	Motor		Yachting Monthly	1939/01	240
Speedy cruiser	Motor	28 ft	Yachting World	1939/02	188
	Yacht, motor	27 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1939/02	152
Cruiser	Motor	35 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1939/12	500
Fast cabin launch	Motor	40 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1939/12	495
Air Sea Rescue	Warship	105 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1945/12	372
Sea Rocket	Passenger	30 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1947/08	317
	Motor	20 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1950/07	289
	Motor	14 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1950/09	371
	Yacht, motor	21 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1950/09	366
	Yacht, motor	22 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1951/03	102
Corsair cruiser	Motor	23 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1952/05	199
Cabin cruiser	Motor	25 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1952/06	239
Eudora	Motor	25 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1952/12	526
Bray craft	Motor	18 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1955/06	260
Plastic cruisers	Motor	38 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1955/12	521
River cruiser	Yacht, motor	32 ft	Motorboat and Yachting	1963/06	64

Transcriptions by Tony Barton, pictures of Miss England II from Brian Greening for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries © 2019/21
<https://www.foncc.org.uk>