

Remembering Michael Walden, Second Commodore of the Hillyard Owners Association and later President.



Michael was born on February 14th 1933 in Trowbridge, Wiltshire. He was the middle of three brothers; his love of the sea beginning when he was at All Hallows boarding school at Rousdon near Lyme Regis. He often talked of scrambling down to the pebbly beach or cycling into town and renting a rowing boat. Michael always had a taste for adventure and this led to him joining the Merchant Navy at the tender age of 16, straight from school. He worked mostly on tankers taking oil from the Arabian Gulf to Brazil. This was a formative experience for him and left him wanting to sail the oceans in later life.

Michael met Gillian when she was 16 and he was 19, over Harvest supper at her parents' house and married three years later, having two daughters, Sally and Tessa.

After the Merchant Navy, and National Service at Catterick, Germany and on Salisbury Plain he began work in the family business. At that stage it was a bakery, chicken processing and egg packing enterprise, later on making frozen ready meals for hospitals, schools and running supermarkets. The business, though now owned by a German firm still exists today as Wiltshire Farm Foods.

Michael was a keen sportsman from his early years as a school athlete. He had a pilot's licence in his early twenties. As a young man, he became very involved in canoeing, even organising the annual Bath to Bradford-on-Avon canoe race, with family weekends travelling to race events with his kayak strapped on the car roof. In his thirties, he threw himself into cam-

paigning for the restoration of the Kennet & Avon Canal. Today, it is taken for granted that boats can navigate the length of this waterway, but in the 1970's much of it was overgrown and dry. It was a great pleasure for his family to take a narrowboat from Devizes to Bath in 2012 with Michael proudly at the helm enjoying the benefits of his hard work decades earlier.

Michael took up sailing seriously around the age of 35 after back problems put paid to competitive canoeing. He bought his first yacht in 1968. She was a Caprice called Aquarelle. After that, he had a Lysander called Caerulea and subsequently bought an Invicta called Mary Blake. He bought *Trimley Maid* in 1983 and liked to call her his magic carpet as she helped him fulfil his dreams.

He first sailed out of Milford Haven, cruising to SW Ireland, La Rochelle and North Brittany and the Hebrides. In 1985 he celebrated the Clyde Cruising association's 75th anniversary by sailing up to Barra. The longest voyage was to the Caribbean over the winter of 1988/9 although in 1993 he sailed to the Azores. The following year *Trimley Maid* took part in the Bristol Festival, sailing to North Wales and in 1997 sailing to Ireland, Cork and Kerry. Michael still took a great interest in *Trimley Maid* after he sold her to Grant Jamieson – Hesk early in 2014.

Without Gillian's help and backing, Michael could never have undertaken his extensive voyages once he retired from business life. Daughter Sally recalls *"Sailing was never really a family activity, despite Dad's best endeavours. Mum is not at all keen on water and our early experiences of sailing as a family included a lot of scrapes (getting stranded on sandbanks as the tide ebbed, near misses with other boats). Much as we all loved and admired Dad's sense of adventure, it is fair to say that we didn't inherit it!! The family always waited in port to meet him when he returned from his big trips and were delighted to see Dad looking very weather-beaten with a fluffy beard. The beard seldom lasted more than a week after landfall."*

Michael was also a member of Poole Yacht Club and for many years *Trimley Maid* was kept there. He joined the HOA in 1983 - he was sailing her back from Littlehampton and stopped at Beaulieu on the way home. He stumbled upon a meeting of the HOA and joined on the spot. Although

neither he nor his crew had a blazer between them, they were welcomed with open arms by Michael Joyce. Michael became a regular attendee at the Rally events on the south coast. He also resurrected an early season event by inviting members to his own club at Poole where we were always very warmly welcomed, initially by him on the pontoon!

He loved to meet with other "Hillyarders" and always enthusiastically encouraged people to join the HOA. Never daunted by long voyages he regularly attended both the West Country and East Coast events as well and used to lyrical about the warm welcome always received. When Michael Joyce was unable to continue with the running of the HOA Michael willingly took this on board and for over 10 years ensured that the Association was in robust health and that membership thrived.

Who will ever forget his "Commodorials" and the many other articles he wrote for our magazine. When he decided he couldn't continue with this he still made an active contribution as Vice President and ultimately President of the Association. Every January both Michael and Gillian would always come and join other members at the Naval Club dinner and many an hour was spent in the small bar reminiscing over voyages past. Even with failing health he still came to join us on the beach at St Just off the Carrick Roads for a barbecue. We all sat and looked in awe at the sight of 6 Hillyards anchored just off the beach. Michael was the ultimate Hillyarder who always gave his unstinting support to the HOA and its members. He will be sadly missed.

Steve Tiffin Commodore

The above tribute appeared in the 2014 December Hillyard Owners Association Newsletter.

Right; **Michael Walden & former Treasurer Vincent van Walt aboard Trimley Maid**

Opposite Page; **Michael & crew in 1994 after their Atlantic Crossing & Trimley Maid sailing in 2004**



Michael was the 3rd owner of the **Trimley Maid**, one of the last 9 tonners built in 1971, cruising extensively in her. In 2017 she crossed the Atlantic again & took part in the ARC Race with her new owner

