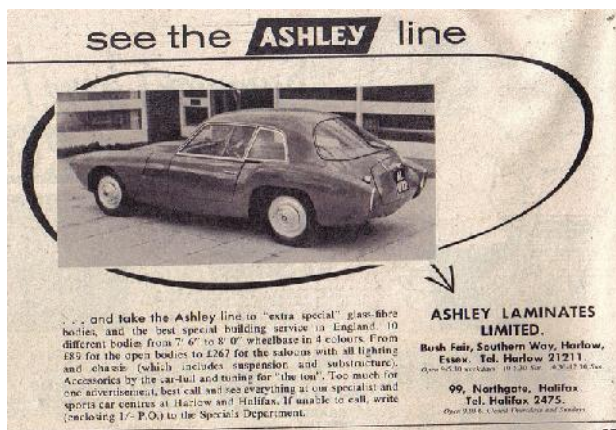


The Leisure Story

In the spring of 2012 I drove to Essex and spent the afternoon with Brian Meerloo hoping to get the definitive account of the early days of Leisure Yachts and Cobramold. I was not disappointed. What a story he had to tell. The interviews were recorded and the following is part one of an attempt at a summary.

Shining through the stories was the determination of small manufacturers and one man bands, back in the 1960's and 70's, striving to find new ways of doing things, often on a shoe string but without the red tape faced by small companies today. The new technology then was fibreglass and resin.

Brian learned much of the "new" fibreglass moulding methods at Ashley Laminates who had been producing car parts and kits of for GRP bodied sports cars since around 1956.



However it was an "accident" that helped launch his manufacturing career. Experimenting in his kitchen one evening with a new type of rubber for making moulds Brian made a hurried exit with a pan of the foul smelling molten rubber, tripped on the way and poured the rubber over a small pile of logs and coal. Clearing up in the morning, he lifted the rubber to find a perfect mould of the coal and logs. Using talcum powder (just happened to be at hand) to thicken the resin, Brian laid up a layer of fibreglass in the mould. When cured the result was translucent with an ash like finish. Place a red bulb behind this and the GRP fire effect was born and went on to grace electric fires all over the country.

In 1959 Brian set up Cobramold with 4 other founding directors, Colin Ashwell, Roy Ballard, Bob (RE) Braine, and Gary Blake. Each put in £300.

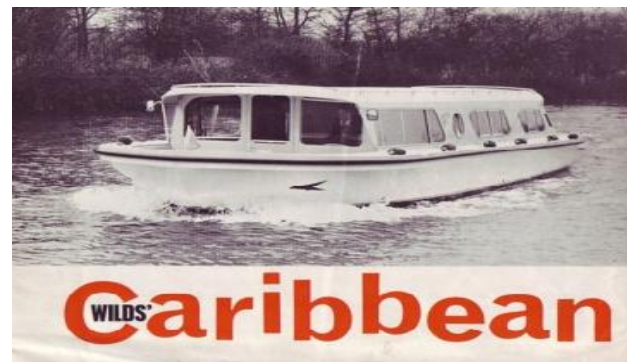
At Stansted Airport after the war the Americans had left many steel Romney Sheds, each covering some 1500 square feet. After negotiating with Mr McGowan (apparently a very religious local farmer who suspected Brian and co were London crooks) they shook hands on a rent of £1 per square foot.

Brian sent Bob Braine to Robinson Willey, the large Birmingham fire manufacturer. The Robinson buyer was impressed and gave an order for 10,000 fire effects for immediate delivery! They eventually

managed to agree on 2,500 units to be delivered each fortnight. It was a logistical nightmare for the fledgling company but Cobramold was on its way.

Cobramold soon branched out into a variety of GRP products from plant pots to Adam fireplaces. With an industrial food mixer and a brew of talcum powder, lead, resin, carbon and titanium white, Brian produced a range of simulated lead products. For nearly a year the company designed and produced GRP columns and a dome to replace the salt blasted and crumbling minarets on the Brighton Pavilion.

Around 1965, with things humming along, Brian answered an advert in the Times seeking a company to produce a GRP cruiser for the Broads, 39 feet long and 12 feet in the beam. Cobramold had entered the marine scene.



The design that revolutionised broads cruising

The advertiser in the Times turned out to be the legendary Frank Wilds who changed the traditional wooden Norfolk Broads cruiser with his GRP Caribbean design, featuring a level floor throughout plus blown warm air central heating. Years ahead of it's time in design, it had full wheelchair access (and this in 1965!)

F B Wilds of Horning ordered 5 of these new Broads cruisers and Brian managed to get an order for another 5 from Blakes (who are still going strong). These new GRP boats revolutionised the cruiser-hire business on the Norfolk Broads from 1966 onwards and influenced cruiser design throughout the UK and Europe.



The Caribbean in production

Brian was aware of the boom in the production of GRP boats and yachts in the 1960's.

The number of companies in the south of England producing GRP cruisers from 17 to 30 feet was simply staggering compared with the minuscule number around today – as were the production runs of the best sellers.

(At least 3,400 Leisure 17 and 17SL's were produced in a near 30 year period from 1967 to 1994. In 1968 Laurent Giles and Westerly introduced the 26 foot Centaur and over 2,400 were built between 1968 and 1980.)

Leisure 17 is Launched in 1967

In 1966 Arthur Howard turned up at Cobramold and asked Brian to make the moulds for a pram type sailing dinghy. Howard also had the plans for a 17 foot sailing cruiser. The venture with Howard apparently ended in acrimony but Brian convinced his business partners to dip their toe into the production of GRP yachts and the Leisure 17 was born.

Unlike some startup GRP boat builders, Cobramold already had nearly ten years experience of GRP technology and this was reflected in the build quality of their boats.

The aim was to sell the Leisure 17 as a ready to go package complete with spars from Selden and sails from Rockall, for £495, about the same price as the a BMC mini.

At the 1967 London Earls Court Boat Show Cobramold took a stand upstairs in a corner, next to *Yachts & Yachting* and took deposits for 20 Leisure 17's. (The first one built went to Wales)

This first Boat Show produced remarkable reassurance for Cobramold.

At the show an American agent sought to order 50 boats to be delivered across the Atlantic as soon as possible. This was simply not possible for the fledgling boat builder, and the order was reluctantly declined. However this was pretty convincing proof that the demand was there!

To cap it all, Peter Lewin and David Williams from the neighbouring *Yachts and Yachting* stand were impressed by the Leisure 17 and printed a favourable article on the new pocket yacht.

A month after the 1967 Boat Show, Brian received a telephone call from Germany, from a sailor who had seen the Leisure 17 article in *Yachts And Yachting*. His name was John Adam and he proposed to sail a Leisure 17 across the Atlantic and finish in time for the 1968 New York Boat Show at the Coliseum. The publicity generated could launch Leisure Yachts into the mainstream. But that's a story of it's own!

Leisure 17 Debut in 1967

At the 1967 Boat Show at Earls Court, Brian Meerloo's company Cobramold made it's debut in the ranks of glassfibre boat builders, with the Leisure 17.

On a neighbouring stand, Peter Lewin of *Yachts and Yachting* magazine was much taken with the new pocket sailing cruiser which came ready-to-sail for £495, about the same price as a BMC mini. Peter published a most favourable article after the show.

5190 Miles in a Leisure 17 !

Can I Sail One Across the Atlantic?

Following a successful first boat show, in February Brian received a telephone call from Germany as a result of the article in *Yachts and Yachting*. The caller was John Adam, and he proposed to sail a Leisure 17 single handed across the Atlantic, in time to arrive in triumph at the January 1968 New York Boat Show. Great publicity for the new firm.

John Adam was not a novice but an experienced merchant seaman who worked as a navigating officer with the container line Hapag-Lloyd and lived in Molln, a small town some 40 kilometres east of Hamburg. John had three requests. The Leisure 17 would have its windows reinforced: the anchor locker should be enclosed and injected with high density foam to form a watertight forward bulkhead: finally he wanted wind operated self steering gear. Otherwise the boat was a standard production model.

The 1960'-s was the era of the single handed OSTAR Atlantic crossings in small cruising yachts by the likes of Blondie Hasler of Cockleshell Heroes fame and by Francis Chichester. Hasler's famous tiny folkboat, Jester, had no windows, a fully enclosed deck and his own self designed wind vane steering gear. In 1965 Robert Manry had sailed the Atlantic west to East, Falmouth, USA to Falmouth, UK in the 14 foot Tinkerbelle. So John's proposal was not far fetched.

In the yard at Cobramold, in the summer of 1967, Brian worked with John on a wind vane steering system which was duly mounted on the stern of the Leisure 17. With a surname of Adam, the L17 just had to be called Eve.

By September 1967, John Adam was photographed in Weymouth, ready to set off.



John Adam in Weymouth September 1967

And this report appeared in a national newspaper.

"A GERMAN Merchant Navy Officer, 28 year-old bearded John Adam arrived at Weymouth today with a 17 ft, glassfibre yacht in which he will begin a solo Atlantic crossing bid tomorrow, September 13th.

The yacht, the Eve, will be the first standard production glassfibre moulded boat to attempt the crossing. The yacht was made by Cobramold Ltd., of Basingbourne Hall, Stansted Airfield, Essex.

The 5,000-mile trip is planned to take three and a half months - and the destination will be the New York Boat Show in February.

Mr. Adam, a second officer in the Merchant Navy, whose home is at Molln, a village near Hamburg, has been planning the trip for three years. He will travel via Spain and the Canary islands and then make the 2,700 mile crossing to Florida. He hopes then to sail a coastal route to Norfolk, Virginia.

He said today, "I have planned the trip in great detail, but I was waiting for the right boat. When I saw this boat reviewed in a yachting magazine, I tested it, and decided it was the one for the trip." The yacht, designed for coastal sailing only, and selling for £545, is a Leisure 17.

For the transatlantic trip it has been fitted with direction finders, echo sounding equipment, a knot recorder and other long-distance refinements.

Ten pounds of macaroni sticks are included in the stores for the journey. "The macaroni is to eat with all the mackerel I am going to catch" said Mr Adams. Also packed into the yacht are 20 gallons of fresh water and 30 pints of long lasting milk"

Keel Worries Put To Rest

John set off in Eve and nothing was heard until Brian received a phone call from a small French fishing port not far from La Rochelle.

John was convinced that the twin keels had become loose in a bumpy down-channel passage. Brian flew to La Rochelle. The Leisure was lifted out on ropes and the keels were found to be rock solid. They concluded that the wave action smacking air between the keels probably gave the impression that the keels were working loose.

Successful 32 day Atlantic Crossing

John set off again. Next stop was Vigo and then Las Palmas in the Canaries. During this time John practised cat napping for 20 minutes at a time but he found sleep deprivation hard to deal with.

However from Las Palmas John made a successful 32 day Atlantic crossing, making landfall in Antigua in mid December 1967.

He met up with an American sailor who presented him with a small spinnaker. Possibly the original blew out in the Atlantic crossing? The American gave advice on sailing on to Miami where John could

make his way up the Intracoastal Waterway to New York. But time was running out, and John only had around 25 days to get to New York in time for the ten day boat show.

John Disappears

In New York, the British Board Of Trade had arranged a plinth outside the Coliseum, to showcase the Atlantic-conquering Leisure 17. But nothing had been heard from John since his departure from Antigua.

Concerned, Brian flew down to Miami to enquire if there had been any news or sighting of John. Brian was prepared to truck the Leisure 17 up to the boat show had John made land. However the coast guard weather printouts suggested that a small 17 foot boat was unlikely to have survived the storm conditions that had been prevalent.

After the Boat Show, a disconsolate Brian flew home to London. He checked with the Admiralty since it was known that one of the older aircraft carriers of the Illustrious type had been in the Caribbean near John's expected track. Again the news was bad: storm force winds encountered, survival of small craft unlikely.

A tragic comedy of errors occurred when Brian contacted the German Embassy over John's disappearance. The embassy staff requested proof of Brian's story, but there was no documentation. In the style of the 60's, Brian and John did things by word of mouth and a handshake. Brian was somewhat nonplussed by the embassy's reaction.

Brian flew to Hamburg for the German Boat Show. Only 40 kilometres away was John's home at Molln where Brian had a difficult and emotional meeting with John's parents. There was still no news of John.

A Chance Meeting Brings Hope

Next stop was the Geneva Boat Show. On the flight Brian was making changes by hand to the Leisure sales brochures, changing the prices to francs.

A fellow passenger enquired about the the brochures and Brian explained that his company manufactured the boats shown in the brochures.

The lady passenger, Ms Giethere, revealed she was a Reuters' journalist returning home on holiday.

Before leaving work Ms Giethere said that she had seen a report about a lone sailor with a very small yacht being shipwrecked on Cuba, but he had been arrested as a suspected spy. The Cubans were very jumpy since it was only a few years since the American backed Bay Of Pigs invasion fiasco.

Ms Giethere's recollection of the story was sketchy but she took a Leisure 17 brochure from Brian and promised to phone back when she had more details. Within 24 hours the Reuter's journalist phoned back to confirm the story with the added detail that the arrested sailor spoke perfect English but had German papers and was suspected of being a CIA spy. His boat had been impounded.

For Brian, this extra detail of a German national who spoke perfect English, blew away any lingering doubts. It had to be John Adam!!

Brian contacted the German consulate who now took the matter seriously. Crucially Germany still had diplomatic links with Cuba and could negotiate directly.

Meanwhile, the Boat Show carnival had moved on to Dusseldorf, where Brian was visited by the internal police who confirmed that John Adam was alive and well, but being held in a Cuban jail. However the officials were hopeful of negotiating John's release. The Cubans eventually asked for £1500 for John's "hospitality", plus the price of his air ticket home. Brian paid the money over (£20k plus in today's in today's terms) and waited.

John Is Released to Travel Home

A few days later whilst still at the Boat Show, Brian's brother Peter phoned to say that John had been released and was on his way home. Brian flew back to Hamburg and was at the Adam house to join in the celebrations on John's safe return which was widely covered by German TV and radio.

With regard to John's shipwreck, he reported that the sea conditions were horrendous and that he had just gone down into the cabin when the yacht was picked up by a huge wave, rolled over and dismasted. He drifted inshore on to a reef where the breakers pushed the yacht on its side, into the calmer waters of a lagoon. John waded ashore into the arms of the Cuban police.

Shorthand Log Fuels Spy Suspicions

The Cuban authorities were highly suspicious. John's passport confirmed he was a German national but he spoke perfect English. The Cubans were convinced he was a CIA spy when they discovered his log book was written in code. John had anticipated that writing a log book in long hand would be pretty difficult on such a small craft and whilst preparing for the voyage in England and staying with the Meerloo family, Brian's wife taught him Pitman Shorthand! That was enough to keep him locked up.

The story does not quite finish there. A couple of years later, Cobramold received a request from the Cuban Naval authorities for a Leisure 17, skeg, rudder and two hatches. The impounded boat was now to be used for training naval cadets.

John Adam Twenty Years On

And there is more of John Adam. Some twenty years later in 1987, the German sailing magazine *Yacht*, ran a competition asking readers to describe their ideal first boat in a 1000 word essay. The competition prize was a newly refurbished Leisure 17 which *Yacht* had found in an abandoned state in Ulm. The refurbishment was carried out by the suppliers who regularly advertised in *Yacht*!

Brian and his wife Carol were asked to attend the Hamburg Boat Show for the prize giving.

Brian suggested that John Adam should be asked to present the *Yacht* prize. They discovered that John still lived in Molln, where he now produced wooden toys and that in the intervening years he had become the German Veteran Iron Man champion.



John Adam and Eve

However whilst training for the European Iron Man Championship, John cycled over the brow of a hill into a nasty accident with a quad bike. John had broken legs and arms but fortunately had just returned to health when *Yacht* contacted him!

John Launches Windpilot

And finally...earlier in this story Brian and John had spent weeks constructing an effective wind vane self steering system. On his return home, John Adam perfected the system and called it Windpilot which he marketed and sold worldwide until finally he sold the business to Peter Foerthman. Peter still sells this excellent piece of kit - windpilot.com

Fourteen years ago I met Peter Foerthman at the London Boat Show and I bought a Windpilot for my Leisure 27. At the time I had no idea of this historical link with Leisure Yachts. I do now!

In some versions of John Adam's voyage, mention is made John being caught in Hurricane Flora. This does not tie with the facts. Hurricane Flora proved most devastating to Cuba and killed over 1750 Cubans, but Flora occurred five years earlier on 4th October 1963. It was the most devastating Atlantic hurricane in recorded history with the total death toll reaching over 8,000.

Also Caribbean hurricanes do not occur in January or February. The hurricane season starts in August and finishes by November. However Cuba can have violent stormy weather in February. It certainly did in 1968 when John Adam was shipwrecked there.

John Adam's 5190 mile voyage.

1600 Weymouth to the Canaries
2590 Canaries to Antigua
1000 Antigua to Cuba

5190 Miles in total

Following the success of John Adam's 1968 successful voyage to the Canaries, and then across the Atlantic to Antigua in a Leisure 17, boat production at Cobramold really took off.

Leisure 17

To begin with the Leisure 17's were built on an ad hoc basis, but a meeting with a "rather large" representative for one of the resin suppliers changed things for Brian Meerloo. Peter Mariner introduced Brian to the "new" world of Time and Motion and production at Cobramold was transformed into an assembly line with more than ten boats per week rolling off the line. The L17 was essentially a trailer sailer weighing 1477lbs (670kg).

The L17 was built from 1967 until at least 1995.

The production run of nearly 30 years must be the longest for any UK trailer-sailer yacht. Over 3,400 were built, but exact numbers are hard to pin down following company liquidations and fires. The original L17 cost around £500 in 1968 but by 1983 the cost was £2819!

The Leisure 22

In 1970, Brian's brother Peter joined the company and a new designer, Graham Caddick designed the next Leisure – the L22. Graham was/is principally known for designing the 33 foot Birchwood power cruiser, much used on the Norfolk Broads. However, he made a good job of the L22 which featured 5ft 8in headroom, a proper galley, dinette area and toilet compartment.

The L22 was no trailer sailer and weighed in at 3,300lbs (1500kg) It was also offered with the option of an inboard engine. The L22 proved really popular in Holland around the ports and marinas of the Zuyderzee (or IJsselmeer). Production of the L22 later fell away after the launch of the L23 in 1973/74 but over 200 were produced.

Exporting To Europe

Production of the L17 hummed along and some of the moulding was contracted out to Brinecraft, based in Brightlingsea, owned and run by Tom Winyard. The L17's had found a ready market in Germany, and a separate company Leisure GMBH was set up in Hamburg to handle this import/export business.

And One Came Back from Turkey!

In 1973 one L17 was sold to a German customer and it remained in the family until it was eventually trailed by car to Turkey. There it was sold and eventually bought by Ramazan Noyan Culum who featured in the national press worldwide in November 2012 when he was arrested off the UK coast near Plymouth. Mr Culum had sailed single handed from Turkey in eight months, covering 2,700 miles without passport or papers.

1,000 miles of this voyage was against the prevailing winds and current, up the Atlantic coasts

of Portugal and Spain, then across Biscay – in October and November 2012!

In 1975, the 2,000th Leisure 17 rolled off the line and was presented to a Mr Hayes, a blind sailor.

Leisure 23

In 1973, Frank Pryor designed Cobramold's second block buster – the Leisure 23. A brochure for the L20 dated 1975, claimed that over 400 L23's had been sold – an amazing number in just over 2 years!

Asked about the start date for producing the L23, Brian Meerloo had no problem with that – it was marked by the introduction of the 3 day week. In 1974, Ted Heath and the Conservatives were in conflict with the miners, and commercial users of electricity only received 3 days of power per week. Mobile generators were like hens' teeth, but one of Brian's agents in N Ireland located a used generator for sale in Enniskillen.

Brian went over on the ferry with a trailer, far west into the "bad lands" of Fermanagh where, at the height of "The Troubles", British licence plates were far from welcome, and returned safely.

The L23 really hit the spot and over 900 were produced between 1974 and 1990.

Weighing in at 4050 (1841kg), this was hardly a trailer sailer but the original brochure showed the boat on a twin axle trailer.

With 5ft 8in headroom the saloon seemed huge for a 23 footer and featured a good port side galley with a dinette to starboard (which would convert to a double berth). Two fore cabin arrangements were available, either with or without a separate toilet compartment. Both outboard and inboard engines were offered.

The SL Wedgie Look Introduced

From 1975 onwards Cobramold introduced the SL versions of the L17 and the L23. Essentially the coachroof and windows were now offered with a much more modern "cheese wedge" shape look, designed by Brian Meerloo.

Buyers could still request the traditional rounded coachroof and windows! An invoice from Jan 1980 priced the basic 23SL at £5550 (sails were extra). Over 900 boats were produced between 1974 and 1990.

The L23SL was probably Brian Meerloo's favourite Leisure and he successfully raced his own boat, Last Minette, all over the East Coast until poor health forced him to sell the boat.

Leisure 20

In 1975 the Leisure 20 was commissioned from German designer, Horst E Glacier. The new model weighed in at 2860lbs (1144kg) and was a move back towards a trailer sailer design, but she needed

a twin axle, braked trailer.

The L20 was principally produced for the German and continental market where so many of the inland waterways, seas and lakes had a 20 foot restriction on "leisure" craft.

The L20 was built from 1975 till at least 1984. The coachroof and windows featured the new wedge shape design and the L20 was offered with three keel options, fin, twin and centreplate.

The saloon had a twin settee saloon with a compact starboard side galley against the forward bulkhead. Headroom was just 5ft 4in in the saloon but it was a cleverly designed 20 footer and featured an ingenious well at the stern for an outboard. One original invoice dated 1983 shows the standard version priced at £5335. Around 250 were built.

Leisure 27

1977 saw the launch of the Frank Pryor designed Leisure 27. With an all up weight of 6750 lbs (3068 kg) she was 66% heavier than the L23. Offered as fin or twin keel with 3360 lbs (1527 kg) in the keel, she offered good stability. However the accommodation, with 6 foot headroom throughout and a generous beam (9'2") was outstanding for a 27 footer.

Accommodation comprised conventional forepeak berths, enclosed heads compartment and hanging locker space; saloon with two settee berths and a dinette table dropping to form a double berth on port side; good L shaped galley to starboard and a quarter berth to port. She thus had berths for 6! Around 105 were built between 1977 and 1980.

Early models had the Volvo MD5A saildrive fitted but this single cylinder 8hp engine was soon replaced by the larger, twin cylinder 13hp Volvo MD7A.

Leisure 29

The German market wanted a larger cockpit than that of the L27, so Brian Meerloo extended the hull and cockpit. The cockpit grew by 2 feet and in 1980 the Leisure 29 had arrived. Some 30 were built. The moulds for the L27 were re-worked to produce the L29 and so moulds for the L27 no longer exist. The L29 weighed in at 7480 lbs (3400 kg) with 3360 lbs (1527 kg) in the keel (fin or twin).

Success to Disaster for Cobramold

In 1979 Cobramold was possibly at it's peak of production with L17, L20, L23, L27 and L29 models (the L22 was probably dropped by then).

But 1979 was a difficult year. Labour Prime Minister Jim Callaghan had endured the public sector strikes through the "Winter Of Discontent".

The lorry drivers strike brought shortages of heating oil and fresh food. Top rate tax was 86%. In May Margaret Thatcher became the first British woman Prime Minister as the Conservatives swept into power. Top rate tax was cut to 60% and currency exchange control was abolished. You could now go

abroad with more than £50!

However within a year, the UK was back in recession and world stock markets had crashed. The booming German export market had been serviced by Leisure GMBH from an office on the Baltic, but Brian was concerned over the finances.

He flew over to Hamburg to investigate and found that some £130k had been siphoned from the accounts; the individual involved eventually turned up dealing in Spanish property in Malaga.

The money was never recovered and the unpaid debts brought down Cobramold in 1979/80. It was a personal disaster for Brian.

Brinecraft Take Over

Tom Winyard who owned Brinecraft, had been moulding Leisure hulls when Cobramold could not match production. When Cobramold folded in 1980 Brinecraft came to an agreement to buy the moulds and produce Leisure Yachts, but stuck only to the L17, L20, and L23 models. Peter Meerloo, Brian's brother also joined Brinecraft and added his knowledge and expertise.

End Of the Bigger Boats and The Lynx 29

No more L27's and L29s were built after 1980 but moulds for the L29 were bought by Jaguar Yachts who produced under 10 boats, re-named the Lynx 29 in 1983-1984.

Jaguar yachts were built by Eric Birch Yachts on Canvey Island. Eric Birch himself is still in business as CYB Glass fibre.

Leisure 26

So throughout the 1980'-s, Brinecraft built the L17, L20 and L23 models and apparently traded successfully under Tom Winyard. Around 1983 Brinecraft acquired the moulds from Oyster yachts of the Holman & Pye designed Oyster 26. It had a transom hung rudder and a fractional rig. A few were built and marketed as the Leisure 26.

Catastrophe For Brinecraft

Then in 1990, a catastrophic fire at Brinecraft seriously damaged much of the original tooling and most of the company records.

And so Brinecraft disappeared from the scene.

Sadly, not long afterwards, Brinecraft owner Tom Winyard died of a heart attack.

After this, production of Leisure yachts moved to Germany using newly built or repaired moulds. For a time, a few 17SL's were produced in Greece. Later the moulds were returned to Germany where the 17SL was produced only by special order.

Boating Scene And The "Leisure " 27SL

Boating Scene of Basildon/Southend on Sea were agents for Mirage Yachts which were built by

Thames Marine (as were Snapdragons).

In 1989 Boating Scene "adopted" the Leisure name and produced a "Leisure 27SL", moulded by Thames Marine, with a Mirage 27 hull and a transom hung rudder. The "Leisure27SL" was in fact the Mirage 27 but was of lower specification. In 1989 the Mirage sold for £27,450 and the Leisure 27SL for £22,450.

The Mirage/L27SL had two settee berths and a drop leaf table instead of the port dinette layout. The Mirage/L27SL's weighed in at 5940 lbs (2700 kg) and were 27 feet in length. They also had shaft drives and not saildrives. The Thames Marine L27SL is therefore a *completely different boat* from the Cobramold Leisure 27.

Cory Yachts Revive The Leisure Name

In 1996 Simon and Brian Cory from Sandwich in Kent (Cory Yachts Ltd), resurrected the Leisure brand in the UK after legally negotiating the use of the Leisure name.

The Corys produced two entirely new designs – the 18 and the 24. A dozen 18's were built but only a prototype 24. The 18 is a sturdy twin keel trailer sailer weighing in at 1800 lbs (818 kg). It sports the Brian Meerloo "cheese wedge" topsides shape which still looks so modernistic on all the Leisure SL models.

The Leisure Name Lives on

The latest news in 2013 is that Mark Gowland of Laymar Marine has bought the moulds for the 18, and he hopes to launch and market the Leisure 18 soon. So the Leisure name lives on and must be one of the last popular, small boat builders' names still "alive" - although there have been rumours that Jaguar Yachts may return.

It is many years since a pocket trailer sailer yacht was built in the UK. Today the focus is on long production runs of boats of 33 feet plus.

So the Leisure story has not yet ended. Now then Laymar Marine, how about making a L18 available for a single handed Atlantic crossing in time for the 2014 Boat Show.....

Boats Built - The "Final" Tally

These are "most agreed" figures I have at present.

Written records appeared to have disappeared following company liquidations and the final fire at Brinecraft.

This does not include the unknown number of L17's were built in Germany/Poland/Greece after 1990

3,400 Leisure 17 and 17 SL's
250 Leisure 20's
100 Leisure 22's
900 Leisure 23 and 23SL's
105 Leisure 27's
30 Leisure 29's
10 Lynx 29's (built by Jaguar/Eric Birch Yachts)
10 Leisure 27SL's (not a Leisure, a Mirage 27)

4,805 over the 28 year period 1966-1994

Kevin Gilroy Jan 2013

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