



HILLYARD — The Man, His Boats, and Their Sailors by Nicholas Gray

The name Hillyard is a byword for simple, practical and affordable yachts in all sizes and for all pockets, designed for enjoyment by the whole family rather than as primarily masculine playthings. **David Hillyard** founded his Littlehampton yard in 1906, and it produced some eight hundred wooden boats—to his own designs—in addition to many craft for the British Admiralty during two world wars. The business continued into the twenty-first century, when timber could no longer compete with modern materials in the production yacht market. It has been said that a Hillyard – with its ample lines and modest sail area – is unlikely to drown you, though it might starve you to death! But many owners developed deep attachments to their boats, and as their families and means grew, came back for another, again and again. Some hundreds of Hillyard yachts survive, much loved, and throughout the world, to the present day.

Nicholas Gray's book describes David Hillyard's voyage from apprentice boatbuilder to founder of a boatbuilding dynasty, and much-loved employer in his adopted home of Littlehampton. It also recounts many voyages, both modest and world-girdling, made by Hillyard yachts, and the activities of those dedicated to maintaining and preserving these unassuming but capable craft, and the memory of the man and the yard which created them.

Sam Llewellyn, maritime author and Editor of *The Marine Quarterly*, writes in his Foreword: 'David Hillyard was born in the late nineteenth century, at the height of the Big Boat era. His family were stalwarts of Rowhedge in Essex, where the aristocratic owners of the enormous cutters dicing in the Solent sent their skippers to pick their racing crews of hard-bitten fishermen. Yachts, in those days, were for the very rich, but the men who sailed them were often the reverse. Perhaps it was a consciousness of this divide that led Hillyard—a devout Christian, descended from a long line of fishermen—to build boats that were robust, practical, and within the means of those lacking the advantage of dukedoms or armaments factories.'

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David Hillyard at the Shipyard



Women employed at the yard during World War II



A typical Hillyard



A larger Hillyard once owned by the Author

About the Author: Nicholas Gray has had a lifelong passion for boats and sailing. He has taken part in the Two Handed Round Britain and Ireland Race and the Azores and Back Race; he has sailed widely round the coasts of Western Europe and the Mediterranean; has taken part in the UK Three Peaks Race, and has crewed in many RORC ocean races. He is a solicitor who also worked in merchant banking and in the oil and gas industry. He has had an interest in a sailmaking company and once owned a boatyard which specialised in the restoration of classic wooden boats. When not sailing, Nicholas divides his time between his homes in Sandwich in Kent and in south-west France. Now retired, he is a member of the Association of Yachting Historians and has written two books of nautical history – *Last Voyages* (Fernhurst Books 2017) and *Astronauts of Cape Horn* (Conrad Press 2018).

About Lodestar Books: Since 2009 Lodestar Books has published more than fifty volumes of new and neglected nautical writing, principally in the fields of classic sail and exploration under sail. Major projects include the Collected Edition of H. W. Tilman (co-published with the climbing specialists Vertebrate Publishing); the designs, writings and art of both Albert Strange and George Holmes; and the illustrated memoirs of the guru of the Polynesian style catamaran, James Wharram. In preparation are two profusely illustrated descriptions of boatbuilding: of a traditional clinker dinghy, and of the largest traditional wooden sailing craft built in the British Isles for many decades.

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Author available for interview

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