
Martin Broom M.B.E.

Innovator and pioneering entrepreneur

June 1934 – October 2013



**Broom Owners Club
Submission for The Martin Broom Trophy - 2018**

C. J. Broom & Sons Limited

What's in a name? Sometimes very little, but where the lineage stretches back over the horizon leaving the floating equivalent of blue plaques everywhere it translates to something far more impressive. I refer of course to the name Broom and to its distinguished and most recent innovator, Martin Broom M.B.E.

Who would have thought that a builder of wooden boats on little more than a manmade, largely landlocked backwater could develop seagoing motor cruisers of spectacular proportion? And yet Martin Broom had the vision and assembled a highly trained team comprising skills that had never been seen before in what was in essence a farming community.

Although Brundall-born Martin Broom died on 7 October 2013 his legacy and memory remains with a fleet of well-constructed, sea-kindly boats that populate Europe and further afield. They have stood the test of time, perform as they should and are a credit to the brand and those who faithfully and with devotion worked tirelessly to manufacture them. C.J. Broom & Sons was and arguably still is '*...the longest established builder of Power Boats in Great Britain.*'

Broads hire craft

But Martin Broom was not alone. This was a truly balanced and well run business that capitalised on the growth in what we now call staycation with a significant hire fleet that oozed credibility and uniformity.

With boat classes that reflected maritime tradition such as *Cadet*, *Captain*, *Navigator* and *Admiral* a significant operation was undertaken and managed by Mrs Jennifer Broom who on changeover day could be seen jumping from boat to boat managing a large complement of staff with the indisputable aid of her walkie-talkie.



Mr & Mrs Broom enjoying a fleet review¹

¹ C.J. Broom & Sons Limited

Boats could be hired from 16:00 hours on Saturdays in those days with no sign of weekday or weekend only use which has become a more recent innovation. The turnaround of the entire Broom hire fleet in 7 hours or less was a mammoth undertaking and one that was not without its surprises. Boats might come back late, damaged or with equipment missing, all of which required prompt action on the part of those who with specialist skill were there to rectify the problem in a seamless way that caused many to wonder if the problem ever existed.



Heyday at Brooms boatyard²



My late mother & father aboard Captain IX on one of many family holidays³

As a family we made frequent trips to the Norfolk Broads for our summer holidays and C.J. Broom & Sons was our preferred boatyard. My mother, father and school friend Ray made the journey from Kent either by coach and bus which took all day, or by Austin Cambridge or Morris 1000 which took less time but still at least twice that accomplished today. But this was 50 years ago and the journey, although tiresome did have a certain satisfaction attached in the same way that a journey to Dubai or the Canary Islands might have today. In other words it was akin to a ground-breaking achievement and we relished our week long floating home even more when it hove into sight.

² C.J. Broom & Sons Limited

³ Ray Noble

Today, many would not tolerate the rather basic facilities although in those days, and in truth we knew no different. Heating came from the engine and so after a day's run it was necessary to batten down the hatches in order to maintain some warmth and with the bonus that unless already part of the crew, the mosquitoes, like the cooler air would be excluded also.

*“For 70 years we have been building craft for visitors’ use when cruising on the Broads. We build them for private owners as well. With some modesty we may say that some of the best craft built on the Broads have come off our stocks. We state this to assure you that if you select one of our cruisers for your holiday, you may be certain that she is soundly built and in first class condition, clean, well-supplied with linen, china and cutlery, and comfortable.”*⁴

The fridge, which was not so much a fridge as a cool box was ‘fuelled’ by half gallon plastic containers filled with water that could be exchanged for frozen ones in chest freezers of any boatyard flying the Blakes flag. Sooner or later we can expect such marine memorabilia to be previewed on the Antiques Roadshow.

The boats sweated during the night with condensation dripping from the windows and a level of bedding moisture that made you wonder if a leak had been sprung during the night. I recall that the collapsing and reinstatement of the wheelhouse roof of *Captain IX* was not for the fainthearted, but this was all part of the adventure and a far cry from the WiFi and creature comforts we have since come to expect.

*“As a member of Blakes, Broom craft are entitled to free water, moorings and service wherever you see the Blakes flag flying. Navigating a Brooms cruiser is easy and our experienced staff will explain all the controls when you take over the boat and take you for an instructive trial run, so you will feel confident to handle the boat before you leave Broom’s large base, which is situated on the attractive river Yare.”*⁵

CAPTAIN (Diesel) Class

Terms per week Low—£53 A—£58 B—£68 C—£77 D—£85 E—£90 F—£95 G—£97 for 4 



Boatyard: Broom Boats Ltd., Brundall.
Length: 34 ft. 6 ins. **Beam:** 10 ft. 3 ins.
Headroom: 6 ft. 2 ins.

Engine: CAPTAIN 10 and 12—B.M.C. diesel. CAPTAIN 8 and 9—Ford Alhair diesel with Borg-Warner gear-box and single lever control. Very economical craft.

Berths: Four single berths with interior foam mattresses.

Galley: Extra large compartment right aft adjoining saloon and opening directly to aft cockpit. Gas stove with grill and oven. Stainless steel sink. Plenty of shelf and cupboard space. Refrigerator. Hot water supply.

Special Features: Very popular craft of the well-known and proved Broom design with accent on roominess and comfort. Electric pressure system supplying hot and cold water to sink and wash-basin. Specially developed system heats water through engine and remains hot 24 hours after engine stops. Separate compartments for wash-basin and W.C. Electric razor point. Very generous wardrobe, drawer and cupboard space. Heating. Easily operated canopy and windscreen can be raised or lowered for all weather conditions. Wind-screen wiper. Wide safe decks round boat. Delightful, easy craft to handle. *Regret no all minor, all female or all male crews.*



An excerpt from Brooms brochure of a Captain class hire cruiser⁶

⁴ Excerpt from a Brooms hire brochure of 1960s

⁵ Excerpt from a Brooms hire brochure of 1960s

⁶ C.J. Broom & Sons Limited

But for all this apparent negativity it was an adventure and one that we delighted in and looked forward to from year to year. These wooden boats were extremely well built as evidenced by the fact that a number of them are still afloat in private ownership representing yet another testament to the build quality that we instantly recognize as being commensurate with the Broom brand.

Booking Form

To Messrs. C. J. BROOM & SONS,
Boat Builders,
Brundall, Norfolk NOR 862

Please book me craft.....
period from..... to.....

In the event of the above-named Craft or period being already engaged, you may book me one of the following in order given:-

1 Craft..... Period.....
2 Craft..... Period.....
3 Craft..... Period.....

I enclose deposit of £3.00 per person per week for the number of persons advertised for the boat. Of this amount £3.00 is the booking deposit which is part payment of the hire charge, and 20p insurance against cancellation as stated in Booking Condition 5. £ . p.

I am over 21 years of age and I agree to be held responsible for the balance which becomes due and payable to the owner at place of embarkation on date mentioned for commencing cruise, as per condition in catalogue.

Signature.....
Name in Capitals.....
Address.....
Date..... Telephone.....

PRINTED BY CREASEY & BECKETT

A Broom C.J. Broom & Sons booking form circa late 1960s⁷

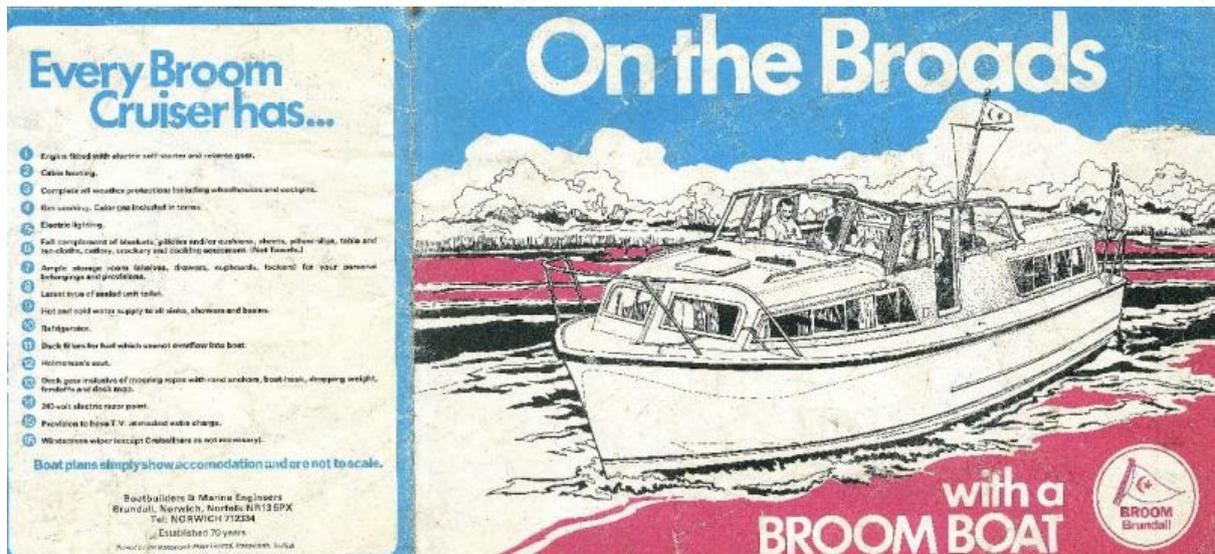
A business in transition

Fiberglass was to not only change, but revolutionise the face of boating for better or worse as well as the inevitable need to seek new and substantially different construction skills. Martin Broom took over the family business from his father in 1965 and nailed his colours to the fibreglass mast ultimately taking control of Aquafibre, builders of fibreglass cruisers in 1971.

The industry at large could not sustain itself on the back of wooden boats and fibreglass was to be the salvation. Twenty years later in 1991 he was to receive an M.B.E. for his 'Service to the marine industry and Broadland'.

But this was not all. The Norfolk Broads clients were changing also. Foreign travel was in vogue and people were becoming more demanding. They wanted home comforts such as a television, a fridge that worked, a bathroom and a food preparation area just like home. The transitional investment from wooden Broads hire craft to fibreglass and all the trimmings must have been significant but there were clearly two or more calls on the company's resources at a time when off-shore cruisers were also in demand.

⁷ C.J. Broom & Sons Limited



Excerpt from a Brooms hire craft brochure circa 1970s⁸

There was clearly a fine balance needed here between the two burgeoning sides of the business. The hire fleet activity peaked during the season which allowed the workforce to be maintained during the winter months for repairs, refurbishment and newbuilds. We can imagine that there were clear gaps in demand into which the largely incongruous off-shore market was satisfied.

These peaks and troughs are not unique however as the much larger shipbuilding industry has struggled for years in order to maintain a highly trained and fully competent workforce through periods of feast and famine, some with more success than others although it is fair to say that all have been exercised by the conundrum.

Broom
THE MOTOR CRUISER BUILDERS
EST. 1898

PRICE LIST

	35cl	390	2 plus 2	42cl	4150e	4500e	500e	5300e
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Standard specification - Single engine	140,950	202,200	258,500	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Standard specification - Twin engine	153,000	233,400	237,300	268,500	297,500	417,500	-	-
Standard specification - Twin engine - All cockpit model (AC)							518,500	524,200
Standard specification - Twin engine - All deck model (AD)							518,500	523,700
Optional additions to standard specification								
1) Alternative to mahogany interior	PGA	PGA	PGA	PGA	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2) Twin stateroom	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6,400	n/a	n/a	n/a
3) Acrylic work surface in galley	1,425	std	std	std	std	std	std	std
4) Hand polished finish to interior woodwork	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3,125	3,925	3,325
4a) Diamond interior woodwork with hand polished finish	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,725	5,950	5,950
5) Hot air heating to each cabin	2,255	std	std	std	std	std	std	std
6) Second shower in fore toilet (3 on 500e & 5300e)	420	std	std	std	std	std	std	std
7) Electric toilet in place of manual (one standard on 4500e)	680	680	680	680	680	680	std	std
8) Microwave oven	595	595	595	595	595	std	std	std
9) Galley extractor fan	195	195	195	std	std	std	std	std
10) Generator 4.5kW	9,125	9,125	9,125	9,125	9,125	n/a	n/a	n/a
11) Generator 15kW	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	std	std	std
12) Additional sockets with 12volt or 240volt (each)	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101
13) Radiologic CD head unit with 6 disc changer and speakers	654	654	654	std	std	std	std	std
13a) Additional waterproof speakers in cockpit	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130
14) Waste tank with deck discharge, connected to 1 toilet	1,765	1,765	1,765	1,765	1,765	1,765	n/a	n/a
15) Waste tank with deck discharge, connected to both toilets	2,048	2,048	2,048	2,048	2,048	2,048	std	std
16) Underwater discharge to tank	525	525	525	525	525	std	std	std
17) Antifouling	750	std	std	std	std	std	std	std
18) Epoxy resin coating prior to antifouling	1,199	1,230	1,230	1,395	1,500	1,358	1,545	1,665
19) Bowthruster 7"	3,230	3,230	3,230	3,230	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
20) Bowthruster 10"	n/a	5,018	5,018	5,018	5,018	5,018	std	std
21) Davit - medium duty	3,465	3,465	3,465	3,465	3,465	n/a	n/a	n/a
22) Davit - heavy duty	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,085	4,085	4,085
23) Hydraulic passenger and dinghy lift	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	PGA	PGA	PGA
24) Broom-Corsey centre lift davit with electric winch	n/a	6,481	6,481	6,481	6,481	6,481	6,481	6,481

August 2004 (continued)

Brooms 2004 price list covering 35cl to 5300s

⁸ C.J. Broom & Sons Limited

To continue the analogy, some shipbuilders have simply 'managed' the build process by subcontracting as much of the construction as possible, which often results in a successful outcome; for example, who better to design the engine room of a ship and its equipment than the machinery manufacturer?

Martin Broom at the helm

The history of C.J. Broom & Sons is impressive. Founded by Charles John Broom in 1898, the business was not without its challenges. Sail to motor, wood to fibreglass and two world wars created risk and uncertainty, but this intrepid family run company with Martin Broom at the helm for more than four decades was undaunted often leaping into the unknown as evidenced by the transition from wooden boats to fibreglass at a time when there was a great deal of scepticism.

We can only marvel at the way in which the business needed to be totally reshaped, not to mention the very significant challenges that would have ensued in order to cope with a variety of directional changes.

Quite how or why the luxury motor cruiser market developed has much to do with evolution and the reputation that the Broom organisation enjoyed as a major and highly respected player on the Broads. The hire business was closed in October 2004 in order to make way for what was seen as Brooms core business comprising boat building, sales and service.

Martin Broom was a champion and an innovator the likes of which we have not witnessed since his demise and one whose passion clearly had more to do with boat construction than the largely seasonal hire fleet.

Further proof of his determination and steadfastness was the fact that it was not until 14 July 2010 that he resigned as a director of C.J. Broom & Sons Limited at the age of 76; no mean achievement. We can only imagine what challenges he was facing in the lead up to that decision, responsible as he was for a business with immense provenance dating back a not inconsiderable 112 years.

Leaving the helm of the family business after 45 years of dedication and personal commitment must have been a tremendous wrench especially at a time when the global financial crisis had doubtless hit both sides of complementary businesses comprising river hire craft and the construction of offshore cruisers.

Martin Broom is succeeded by his wife, Jennifer and two daughters, Mandy and Emma. One wonders whether the business may have survived in family ownership if there had been a son to work alongside and ultimately follow on.

*"According to the records, C.J. Broom & Sons Limited was the subject of a Creditors Voluntary Liquidation with the winding up commencing on 29 September 2010. The company was dissolved on 17 April 2012."*⁹

⁹ Companies House; see <https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/01146611/insolvency>

Quite what the current owners have in mind for the Brundall site is yet to be seen although in the meantime, gone is the ability to build boats and the brokerage arm while berthing and the Broom brand remains.

The company may have changed hands but it still retains a great deal of valuable knowledge. Mention any Broom-built boat name and you can be assured of a potted history from staff that from a provenance perspective is truly fascinating.

For example, try asking why some aspects of the boat you love are incredibly difficult to access, particularly in the engine room and you will hear that this was the domain of a shorter than most Broom employee that delighted in tidily tucking accessories, pipework and electrics in places that might one day need Sir Tony Robinson and the Time Team to find!

The logo for Broom, featuring the word "Broom" in a stylized, italicized, serif font with a horizontal line underneath.

The relationship with Broom has never been too distant. In 2013 I purchased a Broom 39 called *Shamroig* renaming her, *Amy Louise* after my mother and in 2018 bought *Lady Ella*, now renamed *Ladoucette*, a Broom 50. When built the Broom 50s would have cost £500,000. The current estimate is that the price today would be £1,100,000.

These boats are a very long way from my initial introduction to the hire fleet many years ago but they have in common the passion, superiority and customer facing care that created them. The build quality is second to none and reflects the planning and construction skill that went into an offshore fleet that still turn heads to this day.



Broom 39, Amy Louise at Burgh St Peter

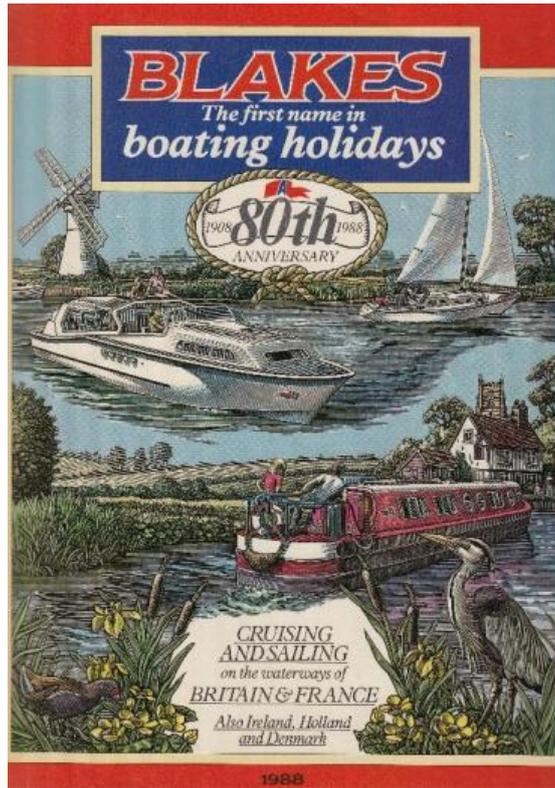


Broom 50, Ladoucette in Ramsgate marina

Martin Broom was born in June 1943, attended school in Norwich and served his apprenticeship as a boat building apprentice at Herbert Woods boatyard in Potter Heigham. For many years Norfolk Broads holidays were marketed by Blakes and Hoseasons with Martin Broom serving as vice chairman of Blakes.

Despite what must have been a demanding business, he was prominent in the British Marine Federation, served briefly as chairman of London Boat Shows, a board member of Yarmouth Port & Haven Commissioners and vice chairman of the Broads Authority between 2002 and 2005. In his spare time he was very proficient sailor racing his 14ft Norfolk One Design.





Commemoration of Blakes 80th anniversary in 1988¹⁰

Martin Broom may not be with us now, but like the other great names in marine history such as Christopher Cockerill and Donald Campbell and others his legacy and inventiveness lives on in the boats that he designed and carefully constructed.

Broom Owners Club

Furthermore, the Broom Owners Club keeps his memory and standards alive through a loyal following of those who are wedded to this iconic brand. These writings are therefore a devoted tribute to a business that through thick and thin survived for 112 years under the control of the Broom family.

Even though still proudly carrying the same branding, the business has contracted since 2010 and yet there is surely still a place for a boatyard that evokes capability and quality.

Although he may have struggled to grasp the principles and benefits of fibreglass when compared with varnished wood, Charles John Broom would surely have been impressed with the way in which the company moved with the times. If not the case in its early years, Broom became an undoubted leader in its field, an innovator that broke new ground in the design of motor yachts of distinction. The company's prowess in the Norfolk Broads hire boat industry was also impressive albeit dented by the advent of low-cost airlines and the general public's desire to explore further afield.

¹⁰ Blakes Holidays Limited

Could the outcome have been different?

Inevitably the answer is yes, although selling luxury is not easy in an uncertain financial climate and that is at least one of the difficulties that C.J. Broom & Sons presumably experienced following the 2008 global crash. When forward orders dry up for luxury cruisers one solution is to fill the gaps with 'on spec' newbuilds, that is to say maintain production even when there is no sight of an end user.

It is often possible to reduce overheads, remembering that cost savings are 'real' whilst revenue is a 'maybe' although with multifaceted luxury offshore cruisers on the stocks the adept workforce is difficult if not impossible to rein in. In addition some of the components, such as navigation equipment, machinery, fixtures and fittings emanate from far off shores which may bring a currency exchange exposure. That just leaves the income side of the business.

It is risky, but as long as the liquidity exists and funders are onside it is a way of maintaining an experienced workforce and creating the impression that the product is in constant demand. Once Broom's hire fleet had disappeared the opportunity to fill the troughs in production with more modest hire craft was closed and even if it had still existed payback would have been long despite essential short term funding.

In truth, it seems likely that the odds were difficult to overcome without considerable risk. Furthermore, without a son to follow, the family line was broken and the unpalatable inevitability was surely clear.

Insolvency, closure and/or sale is never an attractive option although in some cases the decision is automatic. However, we owe a debt of gratitude to Martin Broom for his sheer perseverance and commitment to a business that he clearly had a tremendous passion for. Members of the Broom Owners Club are the undisputed cheerleaders.

The first question asked was 'What's in a Name?'. The answer in this case is a robust product supported by a dedicated team of skilled employees and the direction and dogged determination of Martin and Jennifer Broom. The industry is all the better for their contribution and as users of the Broom product we are eternally grateful.

Dr Bill Moses M.B.E.
August 2018