

Sir Alec Rose 1908-91

by Gordon Braddock

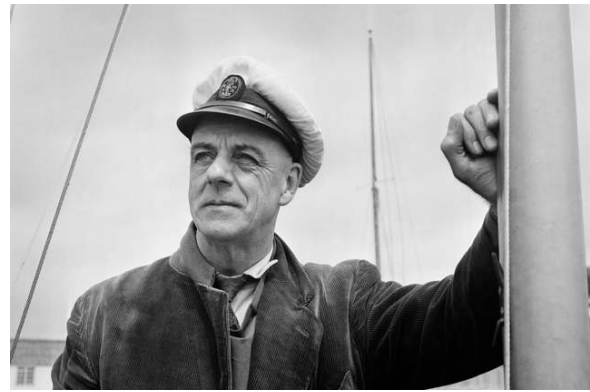
How can circumnavigator Alec Rose qualify for inclusion in *The Emsworth Echo* when there appears to be no strong connection with Emsworth? Well, his bones have lain interred in Warblington Cemetery for over three decades!

Born and raised in Canterbury, Kent he was bored working for an insurance broker. Alec Richard Rose dreamed of travel and adventure, like his brother. This dream began to be realised when he bought a one-way ticket to Alberta, Canada and found farm work. On returning home, aged 23, he married Barbara and worked with his father for six years. When his father's haulage business was swallowed up due to nationalisation Alec used acquired skills to earn a healthy living on a small holding at Littlebourne, near Canterbury.

Two sons were born before and two daughters during the second world war. Joining the Royal Navy in 1940 Alec found himself serving in *HMS Leith* at Liverpool on convoy duty, attacking and dodging bombers and submarines in the Mediterranean and North Atlantic. On being invalided out of the Senior Service he returned to the market garden trade growing vegetables, tomatoes and flowers. Some years later he took over a retail business in Herne Bay but his eyes were really set on sailing and adventure.



Alec Rose aboard *Lively Lady*



Alec met his second wife Dorothy while working on his first yacht *Neptune's Daughter*. He had lived alone after the breakdown of his first marriage. The couple cruised the North Sea, English Channel and Bay of Biscay before settling in Southsea where he bought a greengrocer business in 1961. For two years there was little time for sailing but a desire to compete in the second Transatlantic Race was satisfied in 1964 with a new craft, *Lively Lady*, moored in Langstone Harbour. Although he came fourth Alec did not know until the end of the race.

Francis Chichester was preparing to sail the world single-handed in *Gypsy Moth IV*, a brand new purpose-built craft. There was friendly rivalry but it never was a real race between the two sailors. Indeed Alec was invited onto Francis' boat for drinks on 26th August 1966, the day before Chichester's famous voyage began. *Lively Lady* was laid up in a shed. *Gypsy Moth IV* was custom built for the task but Alec, loyal to *Lively Lady*, settled for an upgrade.

The first attempt at circumnavigating the globe was abandoned early after a catalogue of mishaps and disasters. Alec Rose remained determined to succeed, in spite of these major setbacks.

The following year his successful world circumnavigation began. On 16th July 1967 *Lively Lady* sailed confidently from Langstone Harbour to Portsmouth, starting at noon. Her crew were Mr Rose and mascot, Algy. A throng saw them off. Passing the Nab Tower towards Ushant she crossed the Bay of Biscay to Cape Finisterre and the Atlantic.

They steered close to Madeira, the Canary and Cape Verde Islands. Alec crossed the equator to reach his first goal – The Cape of Good Hope in October. It would be another three months over the lonely Indian Ocean before he arrived in Melbourne, Australia in December 1967. Here a warm welcome awaited him from his son Michael and daughter-in-law Judy as well as dignitaries and a great crowd. In Melbourne he learned he had been given the Freedom of the City of Portsmouth. His departure in January was greeted by another vast crowd. It was a happy month for Alec Richard Rose.

After a significant break Lively Lady set off eastwards. The journey was eventful and the boat needed repairs, arriving unscheduled at Bluff Harbour, New Zealand on 1st February 1968 with a broken mast. Nearly two months later she had traversed the 8,500 miles of vast empty South Pacific Ocean stretching west-to-east and culminating in the challenge of Cape Horn. Lively Lady passed the International dateline Sunday 11th February 1968 while facing the fiercest wind, its 'fury shaking the whole ship'. On one occasion Alec was overcome by fumes but mascot Algy was unhurt! He faced severe gales whilst recuperating and the yacht took severe knocks.

It was too cold to celebrate rounding the Horn with champagne. A hot toddy of lemon, honey and whisky sufficed. In early April 1968 the bad weather had then turned frustratingly from complete calm to stormy and back several times.

The final leg began, from south to north Atlantic and home to Portsmouth on 4th July 1968. At 8.00 am Lively Lady passed the Nab tower escorted by *HMS Whitby* and other craft, increasing exponentially in numbers. The journey had been equally hazardous as the Atlantic threw its worst. The 'Great Adventure' was ending where it had begun nearly a year earlier.

Admiral Sir John and Lady Frewen accompanied Alec's wife Dorothy to meet and greet him at the Royal Albert Yacht Club.

Over 200,000 people lined the harbour to welcome the sailor who enjoyed an escort of scores of yachts and boats. He attended a press conference and a civic reception.

Detail of the preparations, journey and the aftermath may be read in the autobiographical account "My Lively Lady".

Alec Richard Rose was knighted and given the Freedom of the Cities of Portsmouth and London. His legacy is commemorated by a pub restaurant in Port Solent, a lane in Portsmouth and a blue plaque in Osborne Road, Southsea.



Rest in Peace, Sir Alec, in Warblington Cemetery