

# Williams Boat Builders of Deganwy Quay 1930-1979

(Contractors to the Admiralty)

By  
Martin Williams



Cyril Williams (pictured above) started the business named **Williams & Parkinson** in the 1930's. He built traditional wooden boats out of oak, pitch pine, mahogany & teak, many of these boats are still around today .

"Margaret", "Benimora", "Emerald Heritage", "Dunlin" and "Helen"  
"Helen" is still used on the Conwy river, owned by Ronnie Els .

Also "**Seamew**" built 1936 photographed here,

Ref. <http://www.adls.org.uk/t1/content/sea-mew>



**Built for a Liverpool solicitor, Mr O.Smith**

**She was later owned and restored by Harry Quirk from Peel, Isle of Man, used as one of the great little ships that rescued the British Army off the beach at Dunkirk.**

**My Father told me he was able to build a clinker lifeboat within 14 days with the manpower available using their various skills for planking, steaming ribs, riveting with copper nails.**



**Pictured above - always with a woodbine Cyril Williams , Jimmy Craven ,Jack Greenman and at the rear Wally Williams**

**After the war the firm became  
Williams & Nixon Ltd  
now building 20ft motor boats powered with Enfield Diesel Engines for  
the Admiralty .**

**During the year 1958 I started my apprenticeship with the firm,  
working alongside my father's brother Wally, a brilliant boat builder  
and my brother Peter.**

**I used to plane planks and ribs etc and when riveting Peter my  
brother riveted inside the boat with me holding down the iron dolly on  
the heads of each individual copper nail .....that's why today I  
wear a hearing aid .**

**(pardon what did you say ?)**

**We worked on an 112ft ex - naval cruiser "Savourna", when  
completed she sailed away to Monte Carlo on charter.**

Other boats that were built during the next decade included the prototype **West Kirby Hilbre** a 20ft sailing yacht for a Mr Bibby of Liverpool , in all a total of 13 of this type were built ,and still sail at the West Kirby and Menai Strait regattas .

In 1956 my father built the 20ft clinker ferry boat "**Skylark**" for William Morris of Barmouth dispatched by rail, other boats included "**Elskede**" a Norwegian folkboat for George Dunton, some Norwesters' (six I think) and "**Lady Jo**" a Falmouth pilot for John Platt.



"**Lady Jo**" was the first boat to be launched at high water by Tom Buckley's mobile crane over the sea wall , health and safety rules would not allow this method now , in those days you did not ask ,you just got on with it .

Before the quays railway lines were removed we used three hand cranes to off load boats that arrived by road or rail it was cold hard graft using the old block and tackle method .....not much money but loads of fun, which I can't divulge too much here, maybe I'll see you at the local and expand on the good old days ...over a pint or two ...

**Martin Williams**

**February 2010**

**Reference - Cyril's father , Martin's grandfather , William Gladstone  
Williams was the woodwork master at Llandudno Central School -  
circa 1920 and in 1911 became a founder member of Conway Yacht  
Club .**