

HERITAGE

A special place in yachting history

WRITTEN BY MIRIAM CAIN

How different might yachting look were it not for Camper & Nicholsons? What would a superyacht look like had it not been for the J-Class designs? What would a motor yacht look like had it not been for classic Camper & Nicholsons motor yachts like *Evadne* and *Philante*?

But for the continuing presence of Camper & Nicholsons, the world of yachting would arguably have been very different, such has been the influence of the brand on the development of so many aspects of yachting. Ranging from the design of dinghies, the mighty J-Class, elegant gentlemen's yachts to the largest cruising schooners afloat, Camper & Nicholsons is truly synonymous with the history of yachting.

From its roots in Gosport, conveniently across the harbour from the Royal Naval Dockyard at Portsmouth, beginnings were modest. But, fuelled by the fortunes being made from trade and the Industrial Revolution in the early 19th century, yachting began to flourish

and with it Camper & Nicholsons. Much of its success can be attributed to William Camper. Camper, who succeeded founder Francis Amos, was well connected with the Royal Yacht Squadron. His friendships with its members resulted in the company's first known pleasure yacht, *Breeze*. Launched in 1836, she won the King's Cup of that year thus sealing Camper's reputation. By the mid 19th century, the Camper yard had built a string of successful schooners, some of which were used, not only for racing, but also for cruising further afield. The *Nancy Dawson*, built in 1847, recorded one of the first circumnavigations by a yacht. Parallel to its yachting activities, the yard continued to build trading ships and to participate in their voyages.

IMAGE Workers at the Camper & Nicholson yard in Gosport laying the deck of the J-Class yacht *Shamrock V*






TOP Manning the helm of *Endeavour*

NEXT PAGE The J-Class *Velsheda* beats upwind at the Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta, 2003





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The Nicholson involvement in the yard began in 1842, when the then 14-year-old Ben Nicholson joined Camper as an apprentice. It was not until 1860 that his potential was realised with the design of the innovative racing schooner *Aline*. A string of similar vessels were the thrust of the yard's production for the next twenty years. Underpinned by the success of the schooners, and with the name now changed to Camper and Nicholson, Nicholson doubled the size of the yard. The arrival of his three sons in the firm led to the addition of the 's' to the Camper and Nicholsons name. It was Ben's second son, Charles who heralded a further upturn in the fortunes of the company.

Charles' fame as a designer, coupled with Camper and Nicholsons reputation for quality, led to the design and build of some of the world's most successful and famous yachts. Charles' first and resoundingly successful 15-metre *Istria* displayed the first Marconi rig, but of more significance was her lightweight, laminated wood construction. With *Istria's* triumphant design, Charles went on to design and build the next America's Cup challenger, *Shamrock IV*, for Sir Thomas Lipton. He designed and built all the subsequent

challengers up to 1939. For all his successes, it is the J-Class yachts that Charles E Nicholson, and Camper & Nicholsons, are best remembered. Charles built and designed four; *Shamrock V*, *Velsheda*, *Endeavour* and *Endeavour II*. It is a tribute to the standard of Camper and Nicholsons design and build that all except *Endeavour II* are still sailing.

The design and build of both sailing and motor yachts continued, with fluctuating demand throughout the years as yachting prospered and declined due to wars, strikes and other circumstances. Repairs and brokerage had always been an integral part of Camper & Nicholsons activities, and it was during the 1960s that the company expanded into the Mediterranean with the brokerage side of the business, Camper & Nicholsons International. As the 20th century marched on and yachting became inextricably linked with luxury and glamour, Camper & Nicholsons was at the forefront of meeting the needs of its most prestigious clientele. The company continues to uphold the name Camper & Nicholsons, conscious of the unbroken tradition begun so many years ago, more than two centuries after Francis Amos first opened his yard.



THIS PAGE Sir Thomas Lipton at The America's Cup
NEXT PAGE J-Class *Endeavour* racing at Antigua Classic Yacht Regatta, 2001



