



REFLECTIONS 150 YEARS

Jack Earl OAM

Ben Hawke: Well, as a young kid, we lived straight opposite the Amateurs and I actually lived with Jack and Kath in a place called 'Landfall', which is what he built after he sold the *Kathleen (Gillett)*. They had a block of land there, they built the house. Prior to that, the *Kathleen* itself was not far from where we're sitting here, just down near the Rowers at Colleys Boat Shed.

(They'd been) at Rushcutters Bay, got caught out, got in a storm, blew in here for the first time and went, wow! And never really left. So the boat was here for the whole time before they went on the round the world trip. My mother (Maris) and my mad uncle, Mick, who was quite a sailing character himself – a very good hand – grew up in this bay and then they moved across (to) the *Maris* when that was built. It was moored at Mosman Bay. The mooring is still there. Tomo's got his boat, *Indulgence*, on old Jack's mooring.

I've still got the ownership of that mooring and the original little form for it. I think it was £5 a year when he first got it. So a very big association with the bay for the whole family and of course with the Amateurs. Even though Jack was the founder of the CYC, the Amateurs was always just across there and he was always involved.

I remember Tony Ashleigh, who the older members will remember ran the slipway, was a great mate of my uncle's. So there's always been that association (with the Amateurs).

Ian Macintosh: So Jack and Kath and the young family of the *Kathleen Gillett* at some point started looking around for land and if I remember correctly, it was Kath who found the land on which your family house still sits.

BH: Yes, the house is long gone. It got knocked over and there's a mansion there. Then they bought the place next door. A pilot called Keith Thiele, who was quite a sailing character himself, was the next door neighbour. So they bought the place off him. Keith ended up with the *Cadence*, the Swanson 31, or the *Decadence* as we ended up calling it. Did a lot of interesting solo trips. And then of course they moved to the big house across above Old Cremorne Wharf.

But when Jack sailed the *Maris* back from Canada, which would have been late '60s I guess, again the boat ended up back in Mosman Bay, back on the mooring and that's where Ian Keenan saw the *Maris*, fell in love with it and eventually talked Jack into selling it to him.

IM: So we'll come back to Jack and his boats a little later. I'd like to start with Jack's fascinating family background and his early life. Where and what was Jack Earl before he rocked up in Sydney?

BH: Well the family were a family of English artists. Old George Earl, and Percy and Maude, who were his children, were actually painters of animals...of horses, of hunting dogs. One of the paintings sold recently for well over a million dollars. They were serious English artists.

Jack's father wasn't an artist. He was a bit of an adventurer. He came out to Australia, they moved around a bit and then they ended up at Darnley Island in the Torres Strait, where he was the Administrator. So Jack's got a pretty prestigious painting background and (was) just sketching and painting from when he was a little kid. He never stopped.

IM: So he was a born artist?

BH: Born artist. Very poor at school.

IM: And he was a born vagabond of sorts as well, wasn't he?

BH: Yes, well he was romantic, wasn't he? He was living as a young bloke on boats down in North Harbour. They came back from the islands and lived at Manly, so he went to Manly School, not for terribly long. But then started as a cadet artist on newspapers and (as a) commercial artist.

IM: But even before that he was on Darnley Island. He was born, if I recall correctly, in South Africa.

BH: That's right.

IM: He'd been around?

BH: Yeah, and they'd been back to England. They'd come back again. They'd been to Gympie. They'd been to Brisbane, and then they ended up at Darnley Island and then at Queenscliff in Sydney.

IM: Would you have described him as footloose in those days?

BH: He had no formal schooling. The father was a pretty authoritarian sort of character, so the mother homeschooled the kids. The first time he went to school was when he was about 11 or 12, in Manly.

IM: So he worked commercially as an illustrator for a relatively short time?

BH: And then more as a press artist, and that was in the days of the *Sydney Truth*, and Ezra Norton and those famous characters. Norman Lindsay, George Finey were artists of his ilk.

So it was quite a bohemian little scene going. But the thing that set Jack apart from that was the fact that his house was a little boat moored down in North Harbour, where he'd catch the ferry to work every day.

IM: Now at some point in those years he met the love of his life, your grandmother Kathleen (Gillett).

BH: Indeed, yep.

IM: And not long after that two things happened. The first child was born, and they started to build the *Kathleen Gillett*. Where was that built and who built her?

BH: It was Charlie Larsen, at his slipways over near Gladesville. It was an over six year process. He became quite eccentric about the boat. Apparently Jack used to say that he was so in love with the boat himself that he was reluctant to see it go. But eventually after this torturous process it was finished and the family moved aboard and lived on that boat here in Mosman Bay for a long time.

Of course it was a Colin Archer boat based on one of the famous North Sea Rescue vessels. A big lump of a thing, 44 foot, 14 foot bowsprit, a serious handful. No winches, a crap motor that hardly worked, no electrics, no radio and that's how they took it around the world, in that condition.

IM: Jack it seems had done quite a lot of homework before he settled on the Colin Archer design and in fact he'd owned some smaller boats prior to that.

BH: Yeah, he'd had quite a few smaller boats and done a lot of sailing, but this was the boat for him. They were going to get a smaller (boat), but a Colin Archer. A smaller, more fishing based one. But then Larsen himself had the actual designs signed by Colin Archer, pulled them out for the 44 footer and Jack went, "Wow, that's the boat. It's going to be a handful but that's the boat for me". And I think if anyone's seen it, it's at the Maritime Museum, it is a big lump of a boat.

IM: And the boat was finished just as World War II broke out, so that dream was temporarily dashed. They fitted it out, did they not, between times, during the war?

BH: Yeah, and as I said, they were living on the boat. That was the family home and then when Jack went off in the *Kathleen* on the trip, (so) of course he took the family home with him.

And I remember my grandmother saying that if you're going to be married to someone you can't change them, and Jack was a sailor, and she was the one who actually encouraged him to take off. They were going to go as a family, but he took three of his mates and off they went.

IM: But before that, he and some of his mates, including Peter Luke – who we had the privilege of doing the 50th Hobart with on Jim Lawler's boat *Charisma* – they got together and decided they were going to cruise to Hobart and along came a certain Captain John Illingworth, an Englishman who liked (ocean) racing and said it ought to be a race. The Sydney–Hobart race was born and we all know who won it – Illingworth in *Rani*. But Jack in *Kathleen Gillett* was third.

BH: Yeah, he was third.

IM: Did he ever talk to you about that race?

BH: Yeah, well, he described it. There's some photos of them and there was an old guy called Seppy Stevens, who was quite a character. They were around the masthead and as Jack described it, it looked like they'd gone around Cape Horn. They had the old-fashioned oil skins, they had proper salted horse corned beef, but in brine, in kegs. It was a pretty primitive set-up and of course, famously, some of the boats stopped overnight. People went to the movies in Eden when it got rough.

IM: I think Peter Luke on *Wayfarer* stopped somewhere and shot rabbits.

BH: Shot some rabbits.

IM: Replenished the food.

BH: But then they all copped it. They got 70 knots at the entrance of the Derwent, and at the time they thought half the fleet was lost. They couldn't find Illingworth because he was so far ahead, because he just kept pressing on. And it was only a small boat, the *Rani*.

There's some wonderful old footage of the actual race, some Cinesound footage, and you see the twin plane looking for them, the old plane searching for them. Half the fleet was missing, but they eventually all showed up.

IM: So Jack having helped conceive the first Sydney–Hobart, did he go back again? Did he do it?

BH: The next year, they won it with his mate, Bob Bull. They won it in *Christina*. So they'd learned a few clues.

IM: So he was a co-founder and a winner.

BH: So the next year, they won it. So he'd done a lot of the races since then.

IM: Did he do more Sydney Hobarts?

BH: Yeah, quite a few. A lot on the *Maris*. He did three or four on the *Maris*. And he was on *Nocturne* when they actually won line honours in a 38-footer.

IM: And then came 1947–48 and the circumnavigation. Now a few bits of background on this. First of all, it was Jack and Kath's dream to do it.

BH: Exactly.

IM: As it turned out, Kath didn't do the circumnavigation. Why?

BH: The kids were at school. The disruption of taking the family was too much. She actually encouraged him to go, which was quite a big thing. And as I said before, that he was taking the family home. And he famously said that when they left, they had £9 in total.

IM: In cash?

BH: Yeah, cash. And they'd spent that on rum before they got to TI anyway. It had gone. So he had to do some painting on the way around to help subsidise it.

But they had a great trip and great adventures. But to make it up to Kath, he did that fabulous log, of which Shero (John Sheridan) has kindly donated one to the Amateurs. Which is there (in the foyer), and I'd encourage people to go and have a look at it. It's fantastic!

IM: It's a wonderful piece of work. And there are copies of it around the waterfront and in private collections. I'd like to just stick with the circumnavigation. So, they headed off from Sydney. I think there were four or five of them, four of them.

BH: Four of them, yeah.

IM: And he said it was a lump of a boat. It didn't have winches and so on. And you needed people who were strong and good sailors. They went up the East Coast. I think Kath and the kids joined them at some point.

BH: That's right.

IM: And travelled through to Thursday Island.

BH: Yes.

IM: Now, Thursday Island was kind of home turf for Jack, wasn't it?

BH: Yes. Well, that's where he learnt his sailing and where he grew up. And we've still got the conch shell up at the house, which we blow occasionally, which was the curfew shell at Darnley Island.

And when Jack used to get pissed, he'd still be able to remember some of the little Darnley Island songs, the Torres Strait songs. So he'd do a very strange little dance and song with a lap-lap (on).

IM: In the local language?

BH: In the local language.

IM: So nobody else knew what they were going to do.

BH: It could have been made up, but I think it was for real. So that was a pretty strong influence on him. And then they went round to Cocos Keeling. And Cocos Keeling, of course, that was when the Clunies-Ross family whose son, a little kid then, has just died.

IM: John Clunies-Ross. Yeah. The last 'Lord of the Cocos'.

BH: Yeah.

IM: The thing that strikes me about that circumnavigation, there are many things that strike me, but one that is really impressive is that that heavy 44 footer, gaff rig and no mod cons – no modern electronic mod cons – made extremely good, fast passages. There were days when they racked up 150-plus miles. They travelled in very good order.

BH: They were good sailors. And Mick Morris, the kid of the trip, who was only 21. Great guy. They could sail, these guys. And I think for a long time the *Kathleen* had the record from the Galapagos to the Marquesas, up until about 20 years ago. Because they left, of course, in a gale!

IM: And that's the other point that this this was only the second circumnavigation by an Australian. Yeah. And it was a west-about circumnavigation.

BH: Yes.

IM: Not an easy way to go. Did Jack talk to you (about it)? I know he fell in love with the the islands in the Pacific, but did he talk to you about some of the other (places)?

BH: Oh, there were so many great adventures. In the Galapagos, which at that stage was an American Air Force base. St Helena, Ascension, Brazil. In the Caribbean, they caught up with Errol Flynn, who tried to steal some of the crew, poach some of the crew, and they were on the piss with Errol. And then, of course, Tahiti. And those were the days at Bora Bora where Tahitian girls would still swim aboard to the boat.

And I think that's the thing, too. That now every second person is sailing blind, unassisted backwards around the world in a boat under 20 foot. Everything is being done. Cruising sailors are often looked upon with some disdain.

IM: Jack was a pioneer.

BH: Grotty yachties, you know, are not too popular in a lot of ports.

IM: He was a pioneer.

BH: In those days, you'd sail into somewhere (and) straight up to government house. It was a big deal. And they were very careful to be well behaved and to follow the protocols.

I remember it being drummed into us when I went to Tahiti with Ian Kiernan in '74. Jack insisted that we have letters written in French, introductory letters to the port authorities by various notables. People looked at us as if we were a bit mad. And that's 40 years ago, 50 years ago, whatever it is (laughs), with all these formalised ways.

And you kept the boat immaculate. And we would do that on the *Maris*. We would scrub the boat top to bottom before we went into port. And you'd fly the right flags. You'd do everything...

IM: Seaman-like.

BH: Seaman-like. Ship-shape and seaman-like!

IM: So one of the stories I recall from Bruce Stannard's biography of Jack, 'The Life and Art of a Sailor', involved their stopover in St Helena. The governor and the governor's lady made a considerable fuss over them. And the way it read, it seemed like Jack was the biggest thing to arrive there since Napoleon's time.

BH: Well, that was the difference, isn't it? That a visiting yacht was so rare, a traditional boat like that, one from as far away as Australia. And of course, it was just after the war. So there hadn't been a lot of traffic.

Jack's art stood him apart, that he would be doing sketches for the governor. In fact, my son in London is trying to purchase a sketch at the moment that someone got hold of that was done by Jack for the governor of St Helena and is for sale in London. So we're trying pretty hard to get a hold of that.

IM: So the *Kathleen Gillett* and crew arrived back in Sydney in 1948. And we should mention that both when they left and when they came back, there was huge public interest. Lots of boats out, big coverage, lots of interviews and so on and so forth. Jack settles back into family life with Kath and the kids. At what point did *Kathleen Gillett* cease to be in the family?

BH: They'd been back a couple of years. So that would be the early 50s. Just so much work on that boat and so big, and so they settled ashore. They sold the boat. The guy (who) had it was a bit hopeless. You'd see it around the harbour, apparently, doing things wrong and with wrong gear.

Another guy bought it, took it to New Guinea. And then a guy called Declan (O'Donnell) bought it and she was a croc hunter. So she was actually being used as a crocodile boat in New Guinea. Then a guy called Reg Stephenson in Rabaul saw her (and) recognised the boat. He'd seen the thing in 'Seacraft'. And I remember doing an interview with him years

ago and him saying, "My God, that's the *Kathleen Gillett*. That's the boat that Jack Earl sailed around the world in. That's the *Kathleen Gillett*."

So this guy describes buying the boat, putting £10,000 into it to fix her up and then another £10,000, and then another £10,000, and another £10,000, and just gave up. Stopped counting. They came down and did the Hobart race in the *Kathleen* in the late '60s as a New Guinea entry.

So he did a beautiful job on the boat. Sadly, it went to Guam on a cruise. A cyclone came, the boat was wrecked. Sat there. Was about to be bulldozed. And an American family saw the boat on a tip, literally on a tip. Picked it up, didn't know what they were doing, but they saved the boat.

Then we heard about it. Bruce Stannard, Kiernan and I, we all helped purchase the boat. Stannard got the Norwegian government to pay \$250,000 as the Norwegian bicentennial gift, because of the Colin Archer legacy. And it was shipped back. Halversons restored it. And it's now in the Maritime Museum.

IM: And it arrived back not many years before Jack died.

BH: That's right. So Jack saw her come back, and he was still around when it was officially commissioned and put into the museum, which was great.

IM: Did you ever sail on *Kathleen Gillett* with Jack?

BH: Not when I was a kid, because she'd gone. I've sailed subsequently on her, as we all have a bit. But see, she'd gone in the early 50s.

IM: So when did you say she was a big, heavy...

BH: And still is.

IM: A tough boat to sail.

BH: Oh, God, yes. Just huge gear, as I said, 14 foot bowsprit, gaff rigged, no winches.

IM: Sounds like you've got a boat, Ben.

BH: But God, she goes, even today on the few sails I've had on her. She gets a little bit of breeze in her teeth and away she goes.

IM: So we go back to the late '40s, early '50s. The family is here. They're living up overlooking Mosman Bay. Another boat comes into view. *Maris*. Magnificent boat. Can you tell me the origins of *Maris*, the provenance and the builder?

BH: Alan Payne was a mate of Jack's. They liked the (Tasman Seabird) design. Jock Muir was an old mate from Tassie. So they built her down at Battery Point. My uncle Mick went

down and worked with Jock when they were building her. So that's early '60s. She was originally a sloop. They sailed her back, but then converted her into a yawl. Did three or four Hobart races '63, '64.

IM: You did one on her, I think.

BH: Yeah, but a long time later, when Kiernan had her. Because I was only a kid (at that time).

But then they did the next great adventure, which was sail to the States. So just Mick and Jack sailed to Hawaii via Tahiti. And again, they had the record for a boat under 40 foot from Sydney to New Zealand, to Auckland, for 20 or 30 years. Because they left in the most appalling southeast low. And being the madmen that they are, they just hunkered her down. And this little boat was just out of control in this low all the way across to New Zealand. I think it's sort of under seven days or something. And that record stood for a long, long time.

Then to Hawaii. I remember joining them as a kid in Hawaii with my mum. We all lived on the boat for a while.

Then it went to San Francisco. Jack was painting in Sausalito. Jack and Kath went to Mexico in the boat.

Then my uncle (Mick) took it to Canada. And the *Maris* was in Canada for two or three years. And then Jack brought him out, brought his share out, and sailed back into Mosman Bay, probably (in) '68, something like that.

IM: Back across the Pacific.

BH: Back across the Pacific with a couple of blokes. And he would have been well into his 60's or something like that. Brought her back to here. And she was once again back in Mosman Bay, the *Maris*. But she was a handful. The gear was pretty old and tired.

I was sailing with Jack a lot, but I was only 14 or 15. And then Ian Kiernan saw the boat. And we'd have those little tussles because I remember we'd go out, I'd go out for a sail with Jack because the boat was just moored off the house. We'd go out in the afternoons and Kiernan would desperately try to beat us in this little boat that he'd built. And we'd usually see him off.

And just down here, the famous old 'Bilge Rat', I don't know if people remember the 'Bilge', Peter Curran.

So the 'Bilge Rat' was doing some work on the slips just here where we're sitting. And Jack said, "Geez, I might have to sell her 'Bilge'". He said, "My mate Ian Kiernan is the bloke".

And Kiernan bought the boat.

And then Jack became...Jack was sort of Kiernan's mentor. And my brother, Matt, sailed on the boat a lot, as I did over the years. Till my sister, Tiare, now has the boat. So it's back in the family.

IM: It's a delightful circle that *Kathleen Gillett* sits in Sydney Harbour again.

BH: Yep.

IM: And *Maris* not only sits in Sydney Harbour, but sits grandly just off the Amateurs wharf.

BH: And with Tiare, the granddaughter, as the owner. So it's pretty good and still doing adventures off to Lord Howe and down to Tassie. So she's still doing the sea miles.

IM: She'll last a long time.

BH: And then, of course, there's the *Smoky Cape*, which was a boat pretty associated with the Amateurs.

IM: You owned that at one stage.

BH: Yeah, I've owned it a few times, actually (laughs).

IM: But it was Jack's originally.

BH: Yeah, Jack's originally. Again on the *Maris*, the story of the *Smoky Cape* is that the *Maris* had been wrecked, actually, at Coffs Harbour. But Kiernan was determined to save her. Most people would have let her go. And Cec Quilkey, the famous boat builder, got the job.

And after he'd done this fabulous restoration of it, we all sailed to Lord Howe as a shakedown cruise. And I would have been about 18 or something, last year at school I think. And we went up to Lord Howe and Jack and Quilkey got on very well, and started chatting about a little boat he'd like to build.

And Quilkey built it. Said, "Look, I've got some spare timber", and it might have been the offcuts of *Mercedes III* or one of those boats he was building, *Koomooloo*, *Mercedes III*. One of those famous boats. Again, it was a long, long process.

But eventually the *Smoky Cape*, little 24-footer, Randell design, beautiful little boat...which again was moored on the family mooring and out off the Amateurs.

And that's when Jack, I guess, was most associated with the Amateurs because he was a member of the club by that stage and the boat was registered with the Amateurs.

IM: And Jack, in fact, went on to become a life member.

BH: That's right.

I was just going to get back to the *Smoky Cape* briefly and that because it was associated with the Amateurs so much. And Jack eventually...Quilkey built (him) a little 24-foot Randell yawl, over 18-foot-6 on the water, tiny little thing. And he'd actually had it built to sail to Tahiti. He was going to go with Kath in the little boat and sail to Tahiti.

IM: Which you do!

BH: Which he didn't do. I bought the boat off Jack and had it for a while, and then I sold it.

A young guy bought it and he did take it to Tahiti. A guy called Ian Moss. And he shipped the boat to Tahiti, but then he sailed back with the Trades. So he and his wife sailed the little *Smoky Cape*, fulfilled Jack's dream, and sailed her back from Tahiti to Sydney.

And then I was up at Lord Howe after the Lord Howe race with Kenny Beashel, actually, and and 'Friendly' (John Green). And we were pissed at the bowlo. Kenny said, "Oh, the *Smoky Cape*'s up for sale and she's not looking in really good nick".

And 'Friendly' sidled up and said, "Come on, we'll buy her". I said, "Oh mate, she's too small, oh no, she's tiny". "No, no, come on". So we got pissed. Beashel rang up his mate, the broker, and we bought it from the phone, the old public phone at the Lord Howe bowlo.

So then 'Friendly' and I bought it back and we sent it to, who was the mad painter, the boat painter? Used to be around at Careening Cove. Cost a fortune.

IM: Tyers?

BH: Tyers, Geoff Tyers. So we took it round to Geoff Tyers. Spent more than we'd paid for the boat to have it fixed up. So she looked just unbelievable.

And then had her for a while. And then, "Oh, she's too small".

So I sold her again to a mate of mine up at Coasters Retreat, a commercial fisherman called Johnny Alldritt, who's a rough old bugger. In fact, he just died last week, sadly. Had a heart attack, fell off his boat.

Anyway, he wasn't looking after her so 'Friendly' and I bought her back again (chuckles). Had her up at Coasters. And then luckily for the boat, Ian Hansen (came along), the famous marine artist and former shipwright for the Navy, when the Navy still had shipwrights.

So he's got the boat looking just immaculate. And he and Peter Mounsey, the legendary 'Mouse', who is 92 now, get in that little boat, 18-foot-6, sail it to Hobart, sail it to Lord Howe. Remarkable.

And I saw her, I went aboard her the other day, out on the Harbour and she's just looking...

IM: Fitting legacy to Jack, isn't it?

BH: So all three boats are still going, in great hands still. So he'd be a very happy old bloke, I reckon.

IM: I was going to ask you, you alluded earlier to the fact that Jack's name was synonymous with the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia, which it is, by dint of the Sydney-Hobart association. And yet the Amateurs played a not unimportant part in Jack's life. What was Jack's...

BH: Well, Jack fell out with the CYC.

IM: How did he fall out with it?

BH: Oh, just along with (Don) Mickleborough and a lot of his bad mates. They'd get occasionally banned for bad behaviour and (laughs)...

IM: Most unusual for a yacht club!

BH: Yes, yes. And look, (his) life was in Mosman Bay. It was just so much more convenient too.

He didn't have much to do with the CYC. And I think at that period, the CYC wasn't that interested in its history. It's much more interested now. But at that stage, it was that period when they were just obsessed with racing. I remember Mickleborough falling out with them. (But) it's improved, it's changed. They've got the history committee and they're doing some good things.

But no, in (Jack's) latter years it was very much the Amateurs was the club and the *Smoky Cape* was the boat that was associated with that.

IM: Can you describe Jack as a sailor on a boat? I've seen photos of Jack looking like a swashbuckling younger Errol Flynn. Was he more of a cruiser than a racer? And what sort of a sailor was he?

BH: Oh, look, a fantastic sailor. The great thing with Jack was the calmness. There was never a panic. As with all good sailors, there's forward planning, there's forward thinking, there's a lifetime's experience and knowledge.

Look, he was more a cruiser, but he did pretty well racing too. Like he had quite a career...but again, racing was a different scene than it is now.

The other thing (he) was a navigator, (a) sensational navigator. Like he navigated the *Kathleen* around the world. He navigated the *Maris* around (the Pacific).

And I remember sailing to Lord Howe as a kid, whether when I was 15, so it was '69 or something. And people in those days used to miss Lord Howe a lot. You know, they'd sail right past it. He'd never been before. And he was a fair age at this stage. But bang...we're just spot on.

And there's a great story of her in fogs. They're sailing from Hawaii to San Francisco in the *Maris*. And those incredible fogs come in there. They just kept going and looked up and they're right in the middle of the Golden Gate. Which is pretty good going. And that's from Hawaii.

IM: He would have captained happy ships, I imagine.

BH: Oh, yes.

IM: He was a leader?

BH: Yeah. Yeah. A leader, but not in an aggressive way. It was just competence and calmness, which is something I love in a boat. And I think the really good boats are where there's not panic, there's not screaming. It's just calm and fun.

IM: You mentioned his early voyages to Lord Howe Island. I know Lord Howe Island's played an important part in the lives of you and your family. Was it Jack who introduced you to Lord Howe?

BH: Yeah, absolutely. He'd always wanted to go. And for some reason he never got there.

As I said, I was about 15 and we left from Mosman Bay with an old guy called John Bisset, who was a member of the Amateurs way back as well. Lived in Mosman Bay.

IM: Bisset?

BH: Bisso, we used to call him. And off we went. And we were up there for a month.

IM: This was in *Maris*?

BH: In *Maris*, yeah. Before he sold it to Kiernan. And we had a month up there. And when you could get into Sylphs Hole in those days, you could get right in.

IM: And you had the place to yourself, I presume.

BH: Because Jack, being Jack, he knew a few people there anyway, or knew of them. So he became quite the island identity. I met a lot of very badly behaved teenagers like John Green and the Thompsons, and we shared common interests and have continued those on to this day.

IM: All of your doubtful Lord Howe friends.

BH: Yes, exactly.

IM: So let's go back to Jack the artist. How did he paint? When did he paint? What was his approach to a particular commission? And I think he only worked on commissions, is that correct?

BH: Yes, especially in the later years, because he was a commercial artist for a long time. He had to make a living out of art. And I remember him, he did that. For those who are old enough, the Penfolds Port (advertisement), the Fat Friar, was one of his creations.

So he and my mother always made their living as artists. And it's pretty tough to make a living as an artist. But then as his fame grew a bit, he started doing commissions, painting purely seascapes, a huge variety (of them).

And the thing with them was the meticulous research. I remember we had to do a painting of the *Endeavour* when Cook went past the heads and didn't come into the harbour. Sailed past.

So he'd researched it. Kiernan and I took him out in the *Maris*. We had to find exactly the lat(itude) and long(itude) of where it was that Cook was. We sat out there. Jack sketched. I think we had to go out for two or three days, three separate trips. Wind conditions correct at the time from Cook's logs. So that's the sort of work that would go into it.

And because of his sailing knowledge, too, and a lifetime of sketching and being out on the water, the skies and the seas especially are just so authentic and so terrific.

IM: Looking at some of Jack's paintings, I'm also struck by the technical effort that went into them...the rigs, the setting of the sails.

BH: It would take months and he'd get frustrated. I remember him. He would have been working on something for three or four months and then just wipe it, and they were oils. So he'd just wipe the whole painting. "I hate this!". And start again.

And being an insomniac, he'd be up at three in the morning working, even right up...he was still painting right up till before he died in his mid 80s.

IM: Did he paint most days?

BH: Oh, every day.

IM: Every day?

BH: Every day. If he wasn't out sailing or working on the garden. He did an incredible amount of sort of manual work, building stone walls and things, to get a break from the studio. And there was a fair bit of scotch drinking done as well in the early evenings.

IM: Inspirational?

BH: Inspirational scotch drinking in the early evenings (laughs), to the point of probably pass out time. And then three or four in the morning, bango...back into it again.

IM: So what would you rate...this is a subjective question, obviously...what would you rate as his finest paintings? Where are they and why (do you rate them)?

BH: There's the one he did with Dennis Connor. I think it's *Courageous*, which is just fabulous. He did a lot of paintings for big corporate clients...even people like Carl Ryves and these people would commission paintings.

Some of his historical paintings of the *Endeavour* are fantastic. He did a couple of wonderful paintings of the *Maris* for Ian Keenan. Some wonderful paintings of the *Kathleen*.

Some of the works in the logs, too, are just fabulous. And they're the rougher, more free-flowing style, which I think the family liked.

The commissions were quite formal, in the sort of almost (John) Alcott school of grand paintings, where he's freer, rougher. Actually, Tiare's just bought a painting, quite cheaply too...one of the *Maris* that was done on that trip I did with Jack to Lord Howe, which he did for one of his mates. And the daughter just sold it. And it's just a bit rougher and a bit freer, and it's just fabulous.

IM: One of his paintings that struck me immediately is also in (Bruce) Stannard's biography of Jack, and that's his loving portrait of Kathleen.

BH: Yes.

IM: Quite a stunning painting.

BH: And he did some wonderful portraits, because when he was travelling, there was some terrific stuff. When they were in Mexico in the '60s, he did a whole series of fabulous portraits of Mexican Indians, native Mexicans, and (it's) just stunning, stunning stuff. And of course, there's some paintings in the CYC still. There's some paintings down at Royal Tassie (Yacht Club).

IM: Some of the work of his that I love and that's accessible is in those logbooks. Those logbooks were produced in the late '80s or early '90s. They were a limited edition, as I understand.

BH: 200, yep.

IM: 200. Where is the original?

BH: The original is now in the Mitchell Library. So the originals are there. The limited edition, there was 200 that (publisher) Kevin Weldon did. But the stuff in it is just fabulous.

IM: The copy which is in the Amateurs, donated, as you said earlier, by John Sheridan...it really is quite a special artefact, isn't it?

BH: I did a documentary on the *Kathleen* some years ago, and we sort of blatantly said it's one of the finest records of a ship's voyage ever written. But I think that probably still stands true, that it stands up extremely highly because of those illustrations, because of the grandeur and the pure volume of it. These are 12 huge volumes that were often painted with salt water, that were shipped back to my grandmother as like a giant love letter. It's quite a remarkable, remarkable thing. And I've often thought that perhaps there should be a more accessible, cheaper version of it.

IM: Facsimile.

BH: Yeah, with the modern techniques. But we haven't got around to that yet. But it is a magnificent, magnificent document.

IM: Kath, Jack's great love, died seven years before he did. What was Jack like after Kath left?

BH: We were worried. We honestly thought he probably wouldn't last, that that'd see him off. And he was terribly upset, though, (they were) ridiculously close in that sort of romantic way of that period a bit, too.

But what he did was throw himself into his work, and he just doggedly painted, and did some fantastic stuff in those years.

Yeah, we were terribly worried about him, but he toughed it through and just threw himself into his art.

IM: When Jack died, and I've never forgotten this – I only got to know Jack in the last years of his life – but when he died, we were involved in what has to be one of the greatest wakes imaginable.

BH: (Chuckles) It was a pretty good one.

IM: Now, the story, as I remember, and you'll correct me if I'm wrong, was that that Jack had left you a significant sum of money in a jam tin and that you were to recover this and put on a wake for Jack when he 'crossed the bar'. Now, you did this in the family home overlooking Mosman Bay. This wake didn't go for an hour or two. I seem to remember it went for more than a day or two.

BH: Yes, it was quite a time.

IM: When we arrived, the Governor and his wife – in civilian clothes – were leaving. I gather they came back. Tell us about that wake and the people who turned up.

BH: Well, what Jack did was leave a note behind a painting, actually, from when my mother was still alive and myself as the executors. And it was something like \$15,000, which in that time was a fair bit. This was just for the party.

There were very strict instructions. There had to be an island band. There had to be kelp on the coffin. So no flowers. Kelp. So Kiernan and I had to go out and with my brother Matty and we dived at Bradley's Head, in the kelp beds, and got fresh kelp that morning to be put onto the coffin.

Then the wake happened, and it was a cracker. And I remember there were fistfights, and there was naughty things happening in toilets, and all the bad stuff you'd imagine could happen. Wonderful thing. And there was an island band.

And then we took old Jack out, to (his) instructions, out in the *Maris*. And my uncle (Mick) came back from Canada. And we dropped his ashes out past the sewage line, out off the Heads.

We had to, again (Jack said), "Please take me a long way out".

We were following instructions, and some dolphins took us out. I still remember it.

We all threw the ashes in.

We all then jumped over the side and had a swim.

We'd thrown some flowers out.

(Then) we went for a sail, put the kite up and came back through the flowers.

So it really was quite, quite something!