

(Revised by RB – 24 07 2010)

F N M (Nigel) Pusinelli CMG, OBE, MC. April 1919 - July 2010

We are diminished by his departure, not least by the loss of his phenomenal memory and encyclopaedic knowledge of everything related to both the Federation and The Conservancy. His dedication is an inspiration to those who follow.

One of the best known characters in Chichester Harbour has slipped his mooring for the last time, at the age of 91.

Nigel Pusinelli, veteran Solo sailor, Admiral of Emsworth Sailing Club, former Chairman of both Chichester Harbour Federation and Chichester Harbour Conservancy, former Chairman and Secretary of RYA Southern Region and Regional Representative on the RYA General Council for many years, died peacefully at the Pinewood Nursing Home at Chidham, on Saturday 17th July, 2010.

Born in Inverness, Scotland, in 1919, Nigel was brought up in the Home Counties, as his father worked at rubber broking in the City of London. Norfolk was regarded as his home, to where the family moved when he was eight years old. Aged 14, he was sent to Aldenham School, where he was a good sportsman, and developed his leadership skills, also becoming a school prefect. It was here that he began his love of sailing, becoming a member of the Norfolk Broads YC and his first boat was a 12ft National Dinghy, number 80. At 18 Nigel went up to Pembroke College, Cambridge to read law, already having an eye for joining the Colonial Service. After two years, war broke out and Nigel, a keen member of the Cambridge University OTC, was immediately mustered in to The Royal Artillery, and his regiment sent to France. Evacuated through Dunkirk he won his Military Cross after rescuing a brother officer under fire. In 1941 he married Joan, with whom he had previously spent many hours playing tennis, when not on the water. A year later he was sent to India as a major, fighting the Japanese at Arakhan and Imphal, and later completed his military service as a tactics instructor at the School of Artillery in Bombay.

On demobilization and fearful of any mundane 9 to 5 job in the City, Nigel joined the Colonial Service, and was despatched to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, (a chain of Islands in the Pacific, north of Fiji, now known as Kirbati and Tuvaku), where he and Joan spent 11 years. He rose to become both a District and Judicial Commissioner, and finally to be No 2 in the administration. Their first child, Wendy was born soon after his appointment, delaying Joan joining him for some nine months in 1947. His son, Anthony, was born some 3 years later, in 1950. Of his life at that time, he said 'it was like living in a perpetual holiday climate but having to work all hours to keep on top of the files.' Notwithstanding the work Nigel found time to sail and had his own traditional outrigger canoe.

In 1958 he was posted to Aden, first as Deputy Financial Secretary, and after some 4 years he became Director of Establishments and it was from these years that he collected

both his CMG and OBE, for what he modestly described as 'holding the fort'. Of his time in Aden he described it 'rather like a Northern Ireland with several groups of terrorists all fighting us'. He stayed until the bitter end, his last six months escorted by a marine bodyguard. His love of sailing continued, sailing first his home-built GP 14, and latterly a Kestrel, as much as 3 or 4 times a week, in part just to keep himself sane from the rigours of the stressful life. It was here he developed his administrative skills, becoming Commodore of the Aden YC,

After receiving a 'Golden Handshake' from the Colonial Service at age 49, he concluded that rather than attempt to start upon a fresh career he could afford to retire with a modest lifestyle, leaving him free to devote much time to his 'sailing'. He had started sailing at Emsworth SC whilst on leave in 1961, beginning in a 16ft Emsworth-One-Design. He converted to an Enterprise, then to a second-hand 5-0-5, and subsequently to a new one. His son Anthony was his crew or helm, and this provided his most exhilarating sailing. When the Emsworth 5-0-5 fleet moved to Hayling Island Sailing Club his son took the boat there and Nigel, now on his own, purchased his first Solo, and later a second, in which he raced for some 30 years. Although the best he achieved at the Solo Nationals was thirteenth, he won the Veterans Trophy five times, and was presented with a special award in his 80th year by the Association. At Club level his prowess was legendary and he would often collect a wheelbarrow of trophies at the Annual Prizegiving. Not that this prevented him from occasionally competing in other classes, although at one harbour Open Meeting, his lack of finesse with the spinnaker whilst crewing a Wayfarer, nearly lost the trophy at the last mark of the final race!

At Emsworth SC his first job was to be fleet captain for the 'odds and sods' but from this, the post of Rear Commodore Sailing was especially created for him, and thereafter he rose through the remainder of the flag ranks to be Commodore. In 1989, some years after the death of Earl Mountbatten, he was appointed Admiral of the Club which, in addition to ceremonial functions, entitled him to attend the Club's committee meetings, although without any voting rights. This he continued up until 2009, frequently reminding his fellow members of previous history or etiquette, his phenomenal memory never failing to keep those less organized on the 'straight and narrow'. His love of the water was infectious and for many years he would take as many children as the Club launch could carry, to compete in Mengeham Junior Week during the summer holidays.

It was his appointment as Hon. Sailing Secretary of The Chichester Harbour Federation in 1971, which launched his real 'second career'. With such other notable characters as Capt Wynne Edwards and Martin Beale he worked from the formation of the Conservancy in 1971 to preserve the harbour as a place of enjoyment, balancing the needs of the sailor with those of other stakeholders and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which surrounds the 11.5 square miles of water. He proved a worthy architect for many of the practices and procedures for administering the Conservancy, which are still in use today, although undertaken now by computer rather than by his tireless scribing on pages of foolscap paper or on his faithful manual typewriter. Computer and mobile phone technology arrived too late for this ultimate administrator. It was this work for the harbour of which he was most satisfied. His service on the Conservancy Advisory

Committee lasted from inception in 1971 through to 2004. He was also a member of the Conservancy itself for 24 years and was one of only two non-political appointees to be elected Chairman, which he was from 1987 until 1990. He was made a Freeman of The Harbour in 1990.

His administrative skills were not totally exhausted by the Conservancy, and he maintained a considerable interest and enthusiasm in helping to run 'Federation Week' – an event he totally enjoyed, and at which he was invariably a prizewinner, as he was at many other harbour regattas and open meetings, and at which he competed long after his 80th birthday. To him sailing was about competing. He finally retired from Fed' Week in 2005, although he continued to support the Federation by remaining on their Chairman's Committee until 2009. A racing mark in the Emsworth channel bears his name by way of acknowledgment of his contribution to the harbour.

In 1974 The RYA Southern Region was formed and Nigel became Secretary, and some years later, Chairman, which led to his appointment to The RYA Council for six years, serving on the Development and Training Committees, as well as the RYA Central Finance Committee. When once asked how much time he spent on yachting administration he concluded that it was between 30 to 40 hours a week! If that was not enough to fill his time he reluctantly conceded to holding the Chair of Overseas Service Pensioners Association, as well as being a member of the Solent Protection Society for many years. On retirement from his RYA Committee work, he was presented with A Lifetime Achievement Award by HRH The Princess Anne.

Sadly his beloved Joan died 3 days short of the Millenium, after months of nursing and dedicated care, bringing to the fore a compassion that few would have believed of one who had demonstrated such pragmatism in all that he did. Typically he picked himself up and continued to busy himself as Moorings and Billets Officer at Emsworth SC, where he could be found dressed in a his Fed' Week polo shirt, which had taken over as his favoured attire from the brightly coloured Hawaiian shirts of earlier years. No longer able to sustain sailing holidays, he now treated himself to an annual cruise.

Without doubt the unexpected and tragic early death of his son, Anthony, in 2007 whilst working out in Malaysia, left Nigel devastated. With typical stoicism he busied himself supporting Anthony's widow, Kim and her two boys, with whom he lived. His daughter Wendy was now living permanently in Hong Kong. He still maintained his interest at the Emsworth Sailing Club, and having been forced to return early from a 3 month cruise in February 2009, he stubbornly fought his failing health. Final recognition of his contribution to the sailing community was the presentation of a Federation Plate at Emsworth's 90th Birthday Dinner in March 2009 to mark his own 90th birthday a few weeks later. He leaves his daughter Wendy, and daughter-in-law Kim, 5 grandchildren, and 4 great children.

Chichester Harbour Federation

Hon Sailing Secretary	1971-73
Hon. Secretary	1974-78
Vice Chairman	1979-81
Chairman	1981-87

Chairman's Committee	1971-2009
Federation Regatta Committee	1971-2005

Chichester Harbour Conservancy Advisory Committee

Federation Representative	1971-95
RYA Representative	1995-2004

Chairman of Conservancy	1987-90
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Freedom of the Harbour	1990
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Emsworth Sailing Club

Commodore	1977-79
Admiral	1989-2010

Royal Yachting Association

RYA Council for 6 Years
Chairman & Hon Secretary RYA Southern Region
RYA Lifetime Achievement Award

Solo Association

1999 - Special Veteran's Achievement to mark his winning the Veterans' Trophy five years between 1975 and 1982.

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