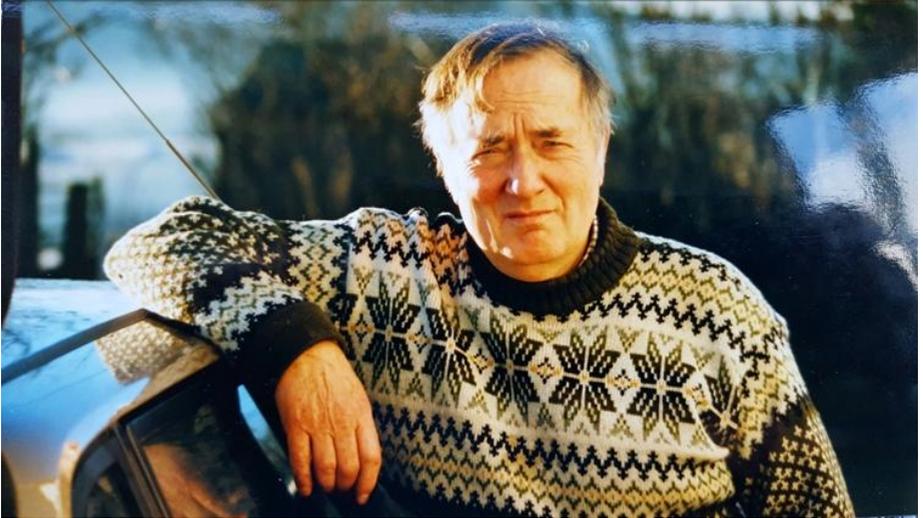


## GERALD ROBERTS 1923-2016



It is with great sadness that we report the death of Gerald Roberts. Over a long and fruitful life Gerald made a huge contribution to the Falklands generally and to the Journal specifically.

In his eulogy to his father, delivered at his funeral, David Roberts said:-

"Gerald Holgate Roberts – was born at Port Stanley, the Falkland Islands, on 10 May 1923. His father - our grandfather - was Captain David William Roberts, a sea captain who became a manager of the Falkland Islands Company and who came from a Welsh-speaking family from North Wales. His mother, Marjorie - our grandmother - was from Yorkshire; she was a talented linguist and amongst many other activities she introduced wool spinning to the Falkland Islands. I mention my father's parents, both of whom were talented and forceful characters, because undoubtedly Dad inherited what was necessary to succeed against the background of starting life 8,000 miles away in the wind-swept South Atlantic.

He attended the Government school at Port Stanley until 1931 when he left in the Motor Vessel *La Paz* with his mother, brother and sister for further education in the UK. It should be mentioned that while still in the Falklands at the age of six he suffered a tobogganing accident, which left him with a lifelong limp and pain in later years about which he rarely complained.

After attending King James's Grammar School at Knaresborough, Yorkshire, he went to Leeds University Dental School and qualified there as a dental surgeon in 1946, having also obtained the senior Prize in Operative Dental Surgery. In 1947 he went for further training at the Dental Faculty, University of Toronto, Canada, and obtained the DDS (Doctor of Dental Surgery) of that University.

After that he returned to the Falkland Islands to be the colonial dentist for three years, 1947–1950 – responsible for providing a dental service for the whole population of 2,000 people scattered over numerous islands in extremes of isolation. He innovated a scheme whereby every settlement in the Falklands, however remote, could receive at least an annual dental visit. To make these visits at a time when there were no roads to speak of in the islands, he travelled either on horseback, with his mechanical dentist's drill slung over the rear of his faithful mount called Tango, or by small sailing cutter, navigating the usually choppy waters and tidal flows racing between the many islands. Dad loved the wilderness of his South Atlantic home and was a very keen bird watcher. Dad's knowledge of the birds and other wildlife of the South Atlantic was encyclopaedic.

After the Falklands tour of duty he returned to England to study orthodontics at the Institute of Dental Surgery, London, in the early 1950s. In 1953 he obtained the Diploma in Dental Orthopaedics at the Royal Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons, Glasgow University. He then joined the hospital service of the National Health Service as a senior registrar at Edinburgh Dental Hospital and achieved Consultant status, the first Falkland Islander to do so."

His contribution to the Journal was immense. I first corresponded with him in 1990 and he immediately sent me two issues of the "Dental Historian" with articles he had written on the history of dentistry in the Falklands. In 1991 I assumed editorship of the Journal and thereafter had a very fruitful correspondence with Gerald. From 1999 onwards he started to forward me articles for publication. These were mainly of a historical nature but were based around Gerald's own experiences and so the history was made all the more real and enjoyable. For example his description of his voyage home in the *La Paz* as a young boy in 1931 embodies what a long journey at sea was like in those days but also interjects with anecdotes on the ship herself (I was pleased to be informed she had been built in Belfast!) and the impact the voyage had on Gerald's life. Likewise, in his personal memoir on the *Lady Elizabeth* (2001).

Gerald's father, Captain David Roberts was a distinguished mariner who assumed command of the Falkland Islands Company's schooner *Gwendolin* in 1921 before taking over SS *Falkland*. He was appointed Colonial Manager of the company in 1938 and played a major role in the success of Operation Tabarin, captaining the *Fitzroy*. Gerald uses this historic family link and his personal, reminiscent style of

writing to document the history of the *Gwendolin* (2003), the *Falkland* (2002) and brought other polar incidents to life.

He contributed many other articles on topics as diverse as the use of Spanish words in Falkland's vocabulary (2002), polar history (e.g. Antarctic Jack 2000), the introduction of horses to the Falklands (MV *Losada* and Horses, 2004), wildlife (2007 – and his general interest in wildlife shone through many articles eg Tussac Birds, 2006) and his "Dining with Jimmy Miller" (1999) is an absolute delight. Editors of local history publications such as the Falkland Islands Journal thrive on such contributions!

As well as his extensive writing, Gerald will be especially remembered for his paintings and those which have been used to grace the front covers of numerous issues of the Journal. For most of its history from 1967 until 1999, the Falkland Islands Journal had a distinctive (but rather drab) uniform grey colour. It was decided to break into colour covers from 2000 and it was obvious that as much of the history of the Falklands was maritime, ship paintings could be effectively used to illustrate the front covers. Gerald had previously sent me photographs of many of his excellent Falkland paintings and I saw the potential to use these for front covers, provided of course there was some reference to the subject in the enclosing pages. I chose his painting of the cutter *Indiana* (to accompany an article on the same topic he had submitted) to be the first colour cover of the FIJ. Gerald expressed his delight and honour that the painting was to be used for this purpose.

Thereafter his paintings have been used on covers of the 2001-3, 2007, 2008-2011 and 2015 issues, a huge contribution. I am happy to report that I still have several pictures of paintings of his for potential use in further issues. In all these Gerald was generous in sharing his skills and talents. Probably my favourite painting is his "Pale Maidens" which was used on the cover of the 2010 issue. Poignantly this was Jane Cameron's favourite flower and an obituary following her death in a tragic accident was printed in the same issue.

I only had the privilege of meeting Gerald once, in 2013, when my wife Geraldine and I went to see him at his home. He was a delightful man, and though advanced in years, had a youthful sparkle in his eye and a quick wit and humour showing a sharp mind. It was a privilege to have met him.

As an Editorial Committee, we mourn his passing and we are happy to be associated with his son's sentiments so aptly expressed with obvious feeling in his eulogy-." He was an unusual man, a remarkable man, a good man".

Jim McAdam