



Marine House, Miall Street Rochdale, Lancashire
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www.honnormarine.co.uk

From Bob and Norma Brown, Rochdale 10th December 2008



There has been much conversation within the Drascombe Association recently of the history of Honor Marine since our obtaining the stewardship of this famous name associated with the building of Drascombe boats in 1997. This has been brought to our notice by our many customers and friends within the Drascombe Association.

We felt, as we cannot advertise within the Drascombe Association News (DAN) or have access to the Association web forums due to the unfair discrimination by certain members of the committee, that we must publish this true and honest account of our dealings with Kate Watkinson, owner of the Drascombe Trade Mark name. This is to clear any confusion or misinformed speculation which has occurred within the Drascombe Association Forum (only accessible through the Members Area). Also included are our dealings with McNulty and eventually Churchouse Boats and includes information that has not generally been made public regarding the liquidation of McNulty boats. It provides a detailed history of Honor Marine Ltd from 1997 to the present day.

From this account it can be seen that we have acted honourably at the highest level. Additional documentation may be released into the public domain to provide providence to the information contained within this document, if necessary.

Lets go back to 1997.....

It was nothing to do with us that the trade mark "Drascombe" became separated from the Honor Marine (UK) Ltd of 1997 when the company went into liquidation.

David McNulty of McNulty boats heard through a rep that Honor Marine (UK) Ltd (based at Totnes, Devon) were in financial difficulties.

David McNulty then contacted Kate Watkinson and told her that he would pay her a £10,000 yearly fee for the use of the trade mark "Drascombe".



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David McNulty would not deal in any way with the appointed liquidator- he was so sure that no one would buy the boat tooling and company without the trade name "Drascombe".

At the same time Bob and I were retiring (having worked together for 30 years in the plastics/chemical business) and we had bought a house in Newquay.

Bob saw a second hand Drascombe Coaster advertised for sale at Nationwide Boats which is situated in Chesterfield just off the M1. We went to buy it as it was ideal for the estuaries around Falmouth.

The salesman at Nationwide Boat sales could not tell us how old the boat was. We noted the hull number and on the Monday morning we rang through to Honor Marine at Totnes expecting to speak to a sales person to try and find its age from the hull number, but the liquidator answered the phone.

Bob asked if there were any boats for sale but the liquidator said no, but all the boat tooling was.

He explained that he had been appointed to raise money for the creditors but no one had put any bids in and he had been trying to tie things up for nearly 6 weeks.

That evening at home Bob told me that after a lot of thought and consideration he would like to put a bid in for the company and as a hobby start to make boats.

So he did and the outcome was that our bid was accepted. When David McNulty heard about it he was very annoyed.

Once we discovered the situation, being honest people Bob drove from Rochdale to Devon and went to see Kate Watkinson. I had been a local magistrate here at Rochdale and Middleton for 12 years and we wanted to be fair to the situation that had arisen.

Bob went to see Kate and had bought a huge bunch of flowers for her.

She didn't invite him in but kept him on the door step.

Bob explained that he would pay Kate the £10,000 fee per annum to keep the Drascombe name with the Honor Marine boat tooling. Not only this but he offered to pay her £10,000 as a one off payment and £2,500 as a balance that the old Honor Marine owed her.

As a result this was a very generous offer. We still cannot understand to this day why this offer was not accepted, especially when McNulty boats were only offering £10,000 per annum for the license. All we can think was that Mrs Watkinson was misguided in her decision- possibly because of Bob's lack of track record in building boats at this time.



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Kate Watkinson listened to what Bob had to say, took the bunch of flowers from him and closed the door in his face.

Poor bewildered Bob still trying to do the right thing then contacted David McNulty of McNulty Boats and made an appointment to meet him with the view of doing a joint venture to keep everything together.

We met at a hotel near Wetherby off the A1 where David just said "You do your thing" and I'll do mine!". As a result there was no joint venture.

We were both disappointed with his attitude.

So as we had the original boat tooling and our 1 acre original factory site we started production there.

David McNulty then had to buy existing boats, strip them of their fixings and woodwork, separate the hulls and decks and take new moulds off them. This means, in fact the boats being built now by the licensed builder, Churchouse Boats are not from the original Drascombe tooling built under the direction of John Watkinson but from second hand boats! Some could say, as we have been told by posts in the forum that these are actually "copies" of the originals!

Lets move on to the McNulty boats liquidation in 2002.....

David McNulty lasted 5 years building these boats then went into liquidation the day after the Southampton Boat Show finished 6 years ago.

At this time Bob approached Kate Watkinson again by writing a letter and a direct telephone call offering to pay the licensing fee of £10,000 per annum for the Drascombe name. No response was made to the letter, Kate took the phone call but cut Bob off.

Once Bob heard about the McNulty liquidation he immediately rang the acting liquidators for McNulty to ask to put a bid on the boat tooling that they had been using to take it off the market.

The liquidators asked "what boat tooling"- there was no boat tooling for these type of boats on the premises of McNulty.

At this point it must be said that McNultys went into liquidation owing some £800,000 to creditors.

They were not taken over by Churchouse Boats as some sources say but owed a substantial sum to creditors who were never paid.

Surprisingly a few weeks later Stewart Brown announced that he was now going to build the "Drascombe" boats.



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The tooling must have left prior to the McNulty liquidation to Churchouse Boats. No doubt that this had been done to avoid the problems that had occurred some years earlier with the sale of Honnor Marine (UK) Ltd and the loss of control of the tooling.

Since then we have built up the business to what it is to-day through commitment and hard work.

Bob and I worked long hours (and still do) and keep our attention focused on supplying and building these lovely classic boats at very affordable prices in order for families to be able to enjoy these lovely boats.

It is now 12 years on and we feel that we have kept the name of Honnor Marine very "honourable" and have built up a good reputation with all our customers and suppliers.

Our quality is second to none- We OWN our premises and have invested heavily in all departments- we make everything in house in the UK and provide a significant contribution to the UK economy (we employ 12 full time staff).

We laminate the boats, make our own custom built trailers (including roller coaster varieties) have a fully equipped carpentry workshop and even make our own custom Tufnol blocks. Details can be seen here:

<http://www.honnormarine.co.uk/FactoryTour.html>

We go to as many boat shows as time allows, to let our prospects and customers see our quality products and for them to get to know us.

This has enabled us to achieve our best year ever in 2008 and to move forward into 2009 with confidence whilst other boat builders are struggling to survive. This is not by luck or by offering a "cheap product"- but by offering products and services of excellent quality at prices that can be afforded. We offer a personalised service to all our customers, as we consider that buying a boat must be a pleasurable experience! We say when you buy a boat from Honnor Marine you don't just buy a boat but "join the family".

We have built up an excellent rapore with a lot of Drascombe owners but it is the majority who do not understand the true story as we have been unable to convey it to them.

As has been described we have tried TWICE to pay the licensee, Kate Watkinson for the use of the Drascombe name. Whether this would be offered to us in the future is unknown as this would be the decision of the licensee (Kate Watkinson). However this would have to be now negotiable after we have tried and failed twice and will never be as generous as the first offer (£22,500.00 in the first year!)



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Hopefully this document will go some way for owners of these beautiful boats and members of the Drascombe Association to understand the facts about how Honnor Marine has achieved its strong position in the market to-day through our own hard work.

Bob and Norma



Bob and Norma, Beale Park 2008