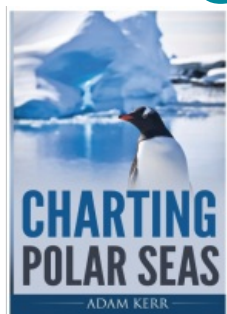


ADAM KERR

# Charting Polar Seas



This book reached HI's reviewer in July 2016 and, sadly, it was while reading of Adam's life, careers and interests that we learned of his death.

Adam Kerr's life was both charmed and charming, and, by his own account, he was very fortunate. He modestly says that he "moved through life without having had to experience any great traumas ... a life story based on fortuitous circumstances and perhaps luck". The book gives an insight into what we may judge a calmer and more ordered life quite distant from our present times. This is not to say that Adam's life was easy: boarding school aged four and then HMS *Conway* as a cadet at 13, followed by several year-long sea voyages.

Adam was the grandson of a well-known painter; his mother was a talented painter; and his father a sailor, trout fisherman and writer of 50-odd books – this genealogy becomes evident throughout his life. A first sea-going adventure, aged three, was exploring the lochs and inlets of the Clyde on a 29-foot converted ship's lifeboat with parents, grandparents and occasionally a nanny, together with fishing and painting paraphernalia. These events alone can be imagined being made into a modern TV drama, along with alcoholic shipwrights and the background threat of war in the late 1930s.

The author relates with affection his early days and shows a great affinity for place – in this case Cornwall and West Scotland, rather regretting that he was in fact born in Chelsea. Latterly, he returned to Cornwall where he recounts occasionally bumping into his near neighbour (and fellow author!) John LeCarre, walking the coastal path.

This autobiography is a more-or-less chronological account starting in childhood and his schooling. There is a formal cadetship with Blue Funnel, followed by a freer, more adventurous time as second mate on RSS *Shackleton* in the Falklands and visiting Antarctic research stations before settling to a 30 years' career with the Canadian Hydrographic Service. Adam was appointed as a director of the International Hydrographic Bureau, in Monaco, in 1987, where he remained for 10 years before returning to his native Cornwall. Adam continued working into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a hydrographic and cartographic expert ... and keen sailor, fisherman, painter and author.

Adam appears to have had a good 'eye' for upcoming navigation and cartographic technologies that he promoted, as well as sound judgment in spotting some of the best career opportunities.

Although the historical accounts are of sextants, station pointers and inking-in of fair sheets, it's the skiing, sailing, trout fishing, painting and sketching that stir the imagination. Even quite late in his career, while a director at IHB in Monaco, we hear of intrigues in Rosie's Bar and a new office, which gave trackside views of the Grand Prix motor races. There are many notable references to pretty young women, beer, champagne and caviar.

While almost all of this story is very good natured and sanguine, it was amusing to read Adam Kerr's occasional acid remark regarding some undeserving individuals and one organisation was described as being overbearingly arrogant.