

Vernon MacAndrew

In 1917 Vernon MacAndrew sold the [MacAndrews Shipping Company](#) from Liverpool to the Royal Mail Group and in 1922 moved down to Dartmouth on the coast of Devon where he bought Ravensbury House. MacAndrew was a keen yachtsman who was soon a leading member of the Royal Dart Yacht Club. He sailed his 12-metre class yacht [Trivia](#), and owned a succession of large motor yachts. The last of these was the *Campeador V*, built by Philip & Son. He encouraged young boys who could not afford to own boats to learn to sail in the D.O.D class dinghies, by providing a small fleet of twelve of them which he would tow behind his motor yacht to take the crews round to all the neighbouring regattas. He was also a Master of the Dartmoor Foxhounds. At Ravensbury he built an additional boathouse, now *La Crevette*, to supplement the existing one, now occupied by Capt. Hampden. He kept a large staff at Ravensbury, and every year they would all be taken aboard his motor yacht round the coast to his Scottish estates for the shooting season. Friends left behind in Warfleet would receive little parcels of venison, the results of the shooting. Later he would give cine-film shows of his holidays in the Highlands to which local children were invited.

In 1933 when the previous owners of the neighbour estate Warfleet House had died, MacAndrew put into action a scheme he had long cherished for enlarging his existing practice of training young sailors. He bought Warfleet, with the help of a group of public spirited yachtsmen, and gave it to the Y.M.C.A. to be used as a training centre for about 30 boys in seamanship, on courses lasting ten months. This was partly a scheme to alleviate unemployment, then high, as boys would also be taught how to be gardeners or chauffeurs. They could then be very useful to owners of large yachts in the summer, and work for ashore on these other jobs during the winter. The Y.M.C.A. would recruit boys from their branches all over the country. Warfleet House provided accommodation for the students, and a fleet of sailing boats kept in two boathouses in the largest of which was also a gymnasium.

The Second World War brought great changes. At the outbreak of war, Vernon MacAndrew offered his motor yacht *Campeador* to the Admiralty for patrol work, and he volunteered with two other members of the Royal Dart Yacht Club as officers. Despite being well over military age they were accepted as Sub-Lieutenants in the R.N.V.R. under Commander

Davey, late of the Royal Navy. They were at sea through the winter of 1939-40, patrolling the channel against submarines and minelayers. The yacht was never designed for winter service, and the 22 men must have been bitterly cold without the heating or ventilation systems necessary for it. On June 22nd, 1940 she hit a mine off the Isle of Wight and sank, with the loss of MacAndrew and all but two of the ship's company. The shattering blow was felt by all who knew him, and especially of course by his poor German-born wife. She could no longer bear to stay at Ravensbury, which she gave to the Y.M.C.A. and then left the town. Like many other big houses, Ravensbury was taken over by the Army during the war, and used to house some of the officers and men who were by now manning the guns out beyond the Castle.



Warfleet Creek showing Ravensbury and Warfleet House in the 1930's