

**Research Questions:**

Anker & Jensen's Yard

von Chris Ennals

I hope that our ECYU addressees and a good number of Freundeskreis KY members who could take a copy of the latest CLASSIC LINES (No. 11, my last) at the Winter Meeting in Hamburg noticed my article, mostly in Norwegian, on sources. It is quite astonishing that so little has been written on the yard's history. In English, we just have the fortuitous visit of Uffa Fox in February 1937; he came to the yard to meet Anker and Crown-Prince Olav on an excursion as part of his lecture tour encompassing Oslo and Stockholm. This was not all that long before Johan Anker finally had to wind up the business in the winter of 1939, after the outbreak of the Second World War in September. Anker himself died a year later (2nd October 1940).

Most of you probably know that Christian Jensen, his partner from 1905 - 1915, was the local boy who made good in Vollen, and the local community round 1900 must have been very proud of him. After serving as a boat-building apprentice under Gudmundsen in Vollen and learning about design under Sinding in Kristiania, he had won a state stipend to study yacht construction under Fife in Scotland and then Oertz in Hamburg in 1904. Meanwhile he had taken over a yard at Vollen since 1897, and having got going with some success, allied himself with the aristocratic Anker, who bought himself into Jensen's yard in 1905. Johan Anker had "burnt his boats" in Halden near the Swedish border, deserting the family business (wood processing from the extensive forests which they owned) and his wife and three young sons. He too had studied yacht construction in Germany, as the main subject of his engineering degree at Charlottenburg Hochschule, Berlin.

While Jensen was the conscientious boatbuilder par excellence, Anker used all the contacts he could muster among his rich friends in the Royal Norwegian Yacht Club, who were now eager to order boats built after the new First International

Rule so that they could take part in national and international yacht racing. There was also the older generation of yachtsmen who wanted solid cruising yachts for their retirement. The yard of the two partners, who were a perfect combination of talented builder and designer, now produced a number of successful yachts which earned them an international reputation: BRAND 4 (12 m) at Kiel 1909, ROLLO (12 m) at Cowes 1911, MAGDA 9 (12 m) and TAIFUN (8 m) at the Stockholm Olympics 1912, and ISABEL ALEXANDRA (15 m), SYMRA (12 m), and QUINTA (8 m) during Europe Week 1914, to name some of them.

Why, then, did Christian Jensen suddenly decide to break out of the partnership in 1915? This is the first major research question. One possibility is that Jensen felt that his own talents as a designer were not getting enough recognition.

12-m-R 'Smyra' mit neuartigem Bermudarigg bei der Europe-Week 1914



But in 1911 the two partners agreed that from then on the boats should be designated as coming from Anker & Jensen, not as before, designed only by Johan Anker, built by Anker and Jensen. A subtle difference perhaps. Or did Jensen want to be his own master again (was there a clash of temperaments between the strong-willed Anker and the self-effacing Jensen), and perhaps make more money alone? This latter hypothesis is strengthened by the following circumstance: not long before, a gap had been left open by the retirement of Colin Archer down in Larvik. Nini Roll Anker (Anker's second wife, a well-known authoress) was keen on the idea that her husband should expand down there, but Johan Anker wished to stick to pleasure yachts. Did Christian Jensen now decide to seize the business opportunity of building working boats following the Archer tradition, while remaining in Vollen? (note 1). The only comment to be found in SEILAS on this mystery is that of Halfdan Hansen in his moving obituary when Jensen died in 1949. He states that it was a great pity that Jensen left the partnership, and that Norwegian yachting suffered as a result.

The situation must have been embarrassing at first. Almost next door, Jensen now started building working boats, especially the large polar vessel MAUD for Roald Amundsen (ready in 1918) and whaling vessels. He must have bumped into

Johan Anker (3. Reihe Mitte mit Schlips und Kragen) im Kreise seiner Mitarbeiter (20er Jahre)



Anker on numerous occasions, although Jensen was not in Anker's social set. There does not seem to have been any animosity (note 2), but Anker could hardly have been happy about the break-up, especially at the beginning. He tried to get Bjarne Aas as a replacement for Jensen, and when this failed, presumably found competent works foremen to supervise the building operations and the gang of shipwrights, mostly local, who were laid on and off according to the demand for boats. In the decade 1915-25, when Jensen had his own yard next door, Anker and Jensen must have been competing against each other for their respective workforces, but perhaps it was relatively easy to get good boat builders.

From the mid-1920s Jensen stopped being a boatbuilder and now blossomed as a designer of a variety of sailing boats: the 19.5 national double-ender, the Nordic 22 kvm, 6 metres and larger cruising metre boats. These vessels were built either at Son, further down the fjord, or on the south coast. They were not built at

Christian Jensen (vordere Reihe, 3. v.l.) und seine Jungs (ca. 1918)





Yachtwerft Anker & Jensen in Vollen (Oslofjord), ca. 1920

Vollen, although Jensen continued to live there! As a designer in Vollen, he was in fact a rival to Johan Anker (who was also feeling the competition from Bjarne Aas and Henrik Robert by the late 1920s). But as a regatta sailor, Johan Anker was still unsurpassed. In 1928, as helmsman on the 6-metre NORNA (his own design and built at Anker & Jensen) he won his second olympic gold medal at Amsterdam. Anker was also inspired to produce the winning design for an international junior boat, called the Dragon, later to be an olympic class.

The two photographs from the article in CLASSIC LINES, reproduced here, show a small but significant difference in the ex-partners' working style: Christian Jensen is sitting with his men (seated 3rd from left) in the same working garb - is it the skeleton of MAUD in the background? The photo of Anker's men from the mid-1920s shows Anker (standing in the third row 6th from the left) in office dress with jacket, shirt and tie. He was hardly "one of the boys", but could probably show his men a thing or two if he ever saw shoddy work. Anker must have spent a great deal of time in his drawing office, and said himself he "sailed his constructions in his dreams".

The second major research question is how exactly Johan Anker managed to sell his yard - he asked Jensen if he was interested in coming back (at the end of the 1930s), but he was not. So Anker let his sub-



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ordinates Larsen and Engebriksen take over - how did they manage to raise the cash at the start of a world war? The war, of course, had not yet reached Norway. Luckily, we may soon be able to shed light on this matter, and also on what exactly happened at the yard during and after the war (note 3). Larsen's son is now retired and lives near Vollen. He is himself a naval architect and has offered to look into family papers and possibly write up the last chapter of the yard's history.

The final closure of the yard for wooden boatbuilding took place sometime in the 1950s. The buildings were pulled down in the early 1960s because of widening the coastal road. The "coup de grace" was a fire in the remaining shed for masts in the 1980s. The facts are not easy to come by, and what is so tantalising is that most of the yard's inventory just disappeared at some stage. There are no order books surviving. The Norwegian Maritime Museum (and the Norwegian Veritas - their list has now been published in the same number of CLASSIC LINES) houses the Anker, and Jensen, drawings that have been collected in Norway, but there are large gaps. We must keep digging!

NOTES

1. I am most grateful to Ingunn Stuvøy, manager of Vollen Coastal Heritage Centre, for pointing out to me that there might have been a link between Colin Archer's retirement and Chr. Jensen's move to the working boat sphere. Nini's wish that her husband Johan should take over the Archer yard is stated in her diary. Her diaries cover a period of 30 years (1910 - 1940) and Johan Anker, her "hero", figures prominently.
2. Johan Anker was thrilled (and relieved?) to receive a congratulatory telegram from Chr. Jensen on his 50th birthday (1921).
3. The interesting fact is that several of our club's cruising 8 metre yachts were built at the yard just after the war to the design drawings of Chr. Jensen (KRABAT 1946, CHRISTINA 1946, VINGA 1947, GLÆDEN 1952 and ARABELLA 1952). Did Jensen come back to the yard in the last years of his life as an adviser?

Zusammenfassung

Chris Ennals ist der Redakteur von KLASSISKE LINJER (Oslo) und gehört zu den Initiatoren der EUROPEAN CLASSIC YACHT UNION. Er hat intensiv nach Zeugnissen zur Historie der Yachtwerft Anker & Jensen in Vollen/Oslofjord geforscht und darüber in K. L. geschrieben. In seinem jüngsten Artikel greift Ennals die Fülle an Fakten, sozio-ökonomischen Zusammenhängen und anekdotischem Beiwerk noch einmal auf und erweitert sie um neue Fragen, die er demnächst ergründen will. Hier die Werftgeschichte im Überblick:

Johan Anker, 1871 geboren, stammte aus wohlhabenden Verhältnissen und war von der TU Berlin-Charlottenburg diplomierter Yachtbau-Ingenieur. Der gleichaltrige Christian Jensen lernte das Schiffbau-Handwerk von der Pike auf. 1897 übernahm er eine Werft in seinem Heimatort Vollen, mit der er sich einen Namen machte. Ein staatliches Stipendium ermöglichte ihm, sich auf dem Gebiet der Yachtkonstruktion bei Fife und bei Oertz weiterzubilden (1904).

Im Jahre 1905 kaufte sich Anker bei Jensen ein. Er brachte nutzbare Beziehungen zur Osloer Gesellschaft ein und war als Konstrukteur talentiert - die ideale Ergänzung zu Jensen, dem grundsoliden Schiffbauer. Die Werft Anker & Jensen wurde schnell mit erfolgreichen Rennyachten international bekannt und erwarb sich auch mit Kreuzeryachten einen Ruf über die Landesgrenzen hinaus.

Jensen beendete die Zusammenarbeit im Jahre 1915 und errichtete in Vollen eine neue Werft. Hier baute er Berufsfahrzeuge, unter anderem Walfänger und Amundsens Polarschiff MAUD. Insofern trat er die Nachfolge von Colin Archer

an, der sich gerade zur Ruhe gesetzt hatte. 1925 gab Jensen den Schiffbau auf und verlegte sich ganz auf Yachtkonstruktion und Bauaufsicht. Die Aufträge gingen an Werften am Oslofjord und an der norwegischen Südküste.

Anker betrieb die Werft unter ihrem angesehenen Namen alleine weiter, konnte aber keinen Ersatz für Jensen finden. Konkurrenz erwuchs ihm, neben Jensen, in den Konstrukteuren Bjarne Aas und Henrik Robert. Ende der 30er Jahre suchte Anker die frühere Partnerschaft zu erneuern, doch Jensen zeigte kein Interesse. Schließlich verkaufte Anker die Werft Ende 1939 an zwei seiner Angestellten, die sie noch bis in die 50er Jahre betrieben. Die Gebäude wurden Anfang der 60er Jahre abgerissen, und in den 80ern brannte das Mastenlager nieder.

Johan Anker starb 1940. Sein Genius lebt fort in der Internationalen Drachenklasse. Im Freundeskreis haben wir von ihm ferner die GUDRUN (10,7 KR, Anker & Jensen 1918) und die STEAM (6 mR, A&R 1922). Christian Jensen lebte bis 1949. In unserer Klasse haben wir die INDIGO (10 mR, Slip & Batbyggeri, Son, 1938).^(HF)

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