

Bryan Hildrew, CBE, FREng, 1920-2012



Bryan Hildrew was a perceptive and forward-thinking engineer who strived to promote and improve the status of the engineering profession which so much of our infrastructure and technological developments depend upon.

Bryan Hildrew was born in Sunderland in 1920. He was educated at Bede Collegiate School and studied for his degree at Sunderland Technical College while apprenticed to North Eastern Marine Engineering Co. Ltd. Awarded the Lloyd's Register Scholarship in 1940 he would later have a unique and distinguished career with that organisation. Wartime service with the Royal Navy intervened and Hildrew served as a Lieutenant (E) onboard HMS *Warspite*, seeing action at both Salerno and Normandy. Transferred to HMS *Shoreham*, he served as Engineer Officer with the Eastern Fleet, seeing service in the Gulf with responsibility for four shore-based workshops.

In 1948, after completing his Master's degree at the University of London, Hildrew joined Lloyd's Register's Research and Engineering Investigation teams, initially focussing on failures and vibration problems in ships, later becoming involved in measuring the static and dynamic strain in heavy industrial engineering plant and structures. Challenges overcome by a team working on the boundaries of investigative research included building their own instruments and strain gauges. The team had to be prepared to fly anywhere in the world, at any time. In one year he spent 39 out of 52 weekends away, leading to him remarking that "as soon as you returned from one job, your next plane ticket would be waiting".

From 1956 Hildrew was seconded for four years to work with the Atomic Energy Authority (AEA) at Harwell working on the project to build the UK's first nuclear submarine HMS *Dreadnought*. Returning to head up the Research department he immediately acquired an IBM 1620 computer in order for the department to undertake their increasingly complex calculations. He was instrumental in setting up a dedicated computer department, the capability of which was recognised by other organisations including Volvo who were interested in these analysis programmes. The initiative paid off when clients began to propose plans for gigantic offshore platforms and very large oil tankers. Hildrew was then instrumental in Lloyd's Register buying the NASTRAN finite element analysis programme developed for NASA. His foresight ensured Lloyd's Register had both software and hardware in place when the offshore business began to take off in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

His considerable engineering and organisational skills were recognised in 1967 when he was appointed Chief Engineer Surveyor. Within three years he would be appointed Technical Director and then Managing Director in 1977. During this period he successfully welded the organisation into a cohesive unit, frequently meeting with clients to discuss their technical requirements. He was a humane man, always concerned with the well-being of staff and families world-wide, ensuring they had reasonable working and living conditions. Visiting as many offices as he could, he was unpleasantly surprised at some of the locations including one that was beyond the stock room of a lingerie shop. Hildrew was instrumental in expanding Lloyd's Register's business into China, heading a delegation in 1977 and signing a joint survey agreement in 1980 with the Register of Shipping of the People's Republic of China.

From 1965 he was using his considerable talent to promote the engineering profession, becoming a founding member and later Chairman (1981-82) of the Council of Engineering Institutions (CEI), formed to promote the interests of the profession. Hildrew used his formidable analytical skills to produce statistical reports on the status of engineers including pay and conditions of service and worked tirelessly with other members for engineers to be recognised as a profession in the same way that doctors or lawyers were. From this grew The Fellowship of Engineering of which he was also a founding member and Fellow. His outstanding work with the CEI led to his award of a CBE in the 1977 New Year's Honours List.

He was a lifelong member of both the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and the Institute of Marine Engineers, becoming President of the former in 1980 and the latter in 1983.

Hildrew retired from Lloyd's Register in 1985 but was not prepared to take things easy. He was Chairman of the Abbeyfield Orpington Society from 1987 until 2005. Abbeyfield is a national non-profit charitable society solely dedicated to the welfare and happiness of elderly people in each location.

A keen orienteer, Hildrew also ran marathons until well into his 70s and completed the London Marathon.

In August 1950 he married Megan who predeceased him in November 2009. He is survived by his two sons Ian and Alan, and his daughter Lesley.

Bryan Hildrew, CBE, FEng, engineer, was born on March 19, 1920. He died peacefully on January 11, 2012, aged 91.

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