GORDONSTOUN
Plus Est En Vous

Trevor Jones

Bruce, 1979

Recognised for his pioneering achievements in adapted aviation and sailing, transforming access to outdoor adventure for those with disabilities.

Trevor Jones was born in Zimbabwe in 1961, the eldest of four boys. The family moved back to the UK before his first birthday and settled in Buckinghamshire where the brothers went to the local primary school. After attending prep school at Gayhurst, Trevor went on to Gordonstoun where his love of the sports field eclipsed all. He was Guardian, Vice Captain of the rugby, hockey and cricket teams, competed in athletics, played competitive squash, tennis and was a member of the Surf Lifesavers.

After school, Trevor went to the US and spent a couple of years adventuring - helping out in a boatyard, chartering yachts around the Caribbean and travelling home via numerous stops in Europe. Settling briefly home in Wales, he was pursuing his interest in flying, when a school friend suggested trying out with the Fleet Air Arm. In 1981, aged just 20, he joined up.

Following basic training at Dartmouth, he began intensive flying training - soon moving to helicopters and qualifying on the Gazelle and Sea King - and later on, the Lynx. His first squadron was tasked with peacekeeping duties in the Falklands, where he spent two years supporting the task force organising expeditions, and spending some time off in the Antarctic.He then joined HMS Arganaut as a Lynx helicopter pilot, embarking on deployments to the Caribbean, Iceland and the Faroes gap - even rescuing Richard Branson from an early transatlantic hot air balloon attempt.

In 1988, he was persuaded to sign up for the Navy Ski Team, but during winter training suffered a freak accident which left him quadriplegic and in recovery for many long months.

Undeterred, he became determined to continue his adventures, and in 1992, became the first quadriplegic to earn a Private Pilot’s Licence and fly solo across the English Channel. Turning his attention to his other love, he then specially adapted a 60 foot yacht with voice and joystick controls, completing an epic and challenging 2,500 mile voyage around Britain in 2001. He has returned to the slopes since his accident and even scuba dived for the Challenge Anneka programme, proving that resilience and innovation make the seemingly impossible, remain possible.

His influence has opened the door to opportunities for other disabled people to defy the limits of their mobility and find adventure. Through the Trevor Jones Trust (now the Regain charity), hundreds of people living with disabilities have returned to sport over three decades. His yacht, supported thanks mostly to the Cadogan charity, has become a training vessel, enabling others to find freedom at sea. The flying school he set up for other para- and tetra-plegics is still based at Old Sarum in Hampshire.

Despite once being told his A Level results were among the worst his headmaster had ever seen, Trevor was accepted onto a BA in French and Spanish at Roehampton University in 2004. After four years and semesters in Malaga, Barcelona and Montpelier universities, he graduated with First Class honours and an academic prize.He has put his story in print, in his autobiography Walking on Air and now splits his time between homes in West Wales and the South of France.

I sensed something bad would happen, even before the accident.

I was wandering the streets the night before looking up flights. I don't know what it was, but I wasn't feeling it and I just wanted to go home. I remember lying in the snow right after the crash and thinking "This is it". The thing is, that wasn't even the end of it - my heart arrested on arrival at hospital and I went through a 8 hour operation to fuse my spine before medevac'ing home and spending 10 months in rehab at Stoke Mandeville. It was tough. I'd just been having the most exciting and entertaining life I could possibly have imagined and now it was hard to see the way forward.

My career in the Navy was the perfect continuation of all I had loved at Gordonstoun: here I was, getting paid to have adventures.

Life in the Navy was nothing anyone could prepare you for - but I quickly realised that my experiences at Gordonstoun had given me the best possible start. I'd had a childhood full of activity and sport, continued at school and beyond, and I definitely became aware of the value of all that I'd done at such a young age.

Looking back, that time is just full of great memories and great stories. From canoe expeditions in The Falkland Islands to hitting a rock and thinking the ship would sink in Antarctica, to getting arrested, jailed - and eventually pardoned - in Gibraltar, it was eight action packed and happy years.

After my accident, it was my network from Gordonstoun that picked me up and carried me through.

There were some really dark times, and my self-identity was a bit shattered - but right away, the OG network swung into action. Setting up the Trevor Jones Trust, they tirelessly fundraised to get me back into an active life and challenged me to keep reaching for new heights. It enabled me to avoid thinking of what I'd lost and just pursue what I could do.

My whole life, actually, has been so heavily influenced by Gordonstoun. Some might perceive me as a bit of a daredevil, but it's the skills from my time at school and the incredible experiences I had in the Navy that's given me the resilience and energy to achieve all I have since the accident.

It's difficult to repay the effort and friendship I've received from so many - I wanted to succeed in my challenges as an acknowledgement of that support.Friendships are precious, and the best of mine started and ended with Gordonstoun - those people have been right behind me, all the way. I've had a fantastic time, a great life and I couldn't have done it without them.