



THE DIFFERENCE MONEY MAKES

Two very different millionaires, one recent, the other established, reveal their attitude to the riches we dream of

£40m wreck of
DIVERS FIND
THE GOLD
CZAR'S
BARS

HOW THE RICH LIVE

Diver Keith Jessop, left, became a millionaire when he found and recovered five tons of gold valued at £40m from the wreck of HMS Edinburgh last September. Lynn Barber went to find out how his new status had affected his life

A BRAND-NEW red Porsche turned into the forecourt of the Dorchester Hotel, Mayfair, and slid smoothly into a parking space. Two men leapt out—one huge, bubble-haired in his early twenties; the other shorter, stockier, older, with tousled grey hair. The older man introduced himself as Keith Jessop and the younger as Graham Jessop, his 24-year-old son and partner. We explained that we had a photographer standing by to take photos of them and the Porsche in Hyde Park before the light faded. "We'll lose our parking space," Keith commented ruefully. Graham gestured at the vast imposing Dorchester doorman hovering nearby: "Drop him a bluey," he said to his father, "and ask if he can save us it." Keith nodded, a fiver changed hands, and the Porsche slid out into the Park Lane traffic again, its parking place perfectly secure.

The Jessops conducted the transaction with the aplomb of people who had been dropping blueys to hotel doormen all their lives, but in fact they have only been in the bluey-dropping class for a matter of weeks. It was on September 16, 1981, that Keith Jessop, a 48-year-old diver turned salvor, became worth £1.8m when he found and recovered five

tons of gold valued at £40m from the wreck of HMS Edinburgh sunk in the Barents Sea off Murmansk. When he returned from the operation, he found a new silver Porsche waiting for him on the quayside at Peterhead: he had always said he would have a Porsche when (never if) he recovered the Edinburgh's gold. There was also a red Porsche for Graham and a new car for the wife, Mildred, to replace the old family Cortina.

"We can live in Keighley as easily as anywhere—we've always lived there"

Then, as Keith said, it seemed a bit ostentatious to have two Porsches parked outside a small ex-council house in Keighley—it drew attention to the place, made the neighbours uneasy, and besides, the house was already too small for a family of two parents and three grown-up children. So Keith bought a new £61,000 house a mile up the road and Graham started negotiating for a £32,000 place nearby. "They're not dream houses," they say disparagingly, "they're just bigger boxes. It'll take us a year or two to find our dream houses and they could be anywhere in the world—the world's no big apple. But at present we can live in Keighley as easily as anywhere—we've always lived there and we do have a few friends."

Three cars, two houses . . . what else have the Jessops been spending their money on? Nothing at all, they insist, they don't believe in spending for the sake of spending, they're not interested in the high life, they're Yorkshiremen, cautious with the pennies, always have been, always will be. Besides, they're not like Pools winners who stumble into their riches by luck. They researched and saved and invested for years to bring the Edinburgh project off, and they don't intend to throw it all away. Their first move on finding themselves millionaires was to get themselves a good bank (Rothchild's) and a good accountant, Oscar ("I'll tell you when you can't afford me") Goldstein, to give them financial advice.

Having established that point, they then relax enough to confess that actually it isn't all that easy to spend money. Many a time they've been out shopping in

Leeds, Manchester, London, and come back with nowt. They can't even buy a drink in a pub, because whenever they appear around Keighley, friends, neighbours and even total strangers insist on standing them a round.

So haven't they bought themselves any presents at all? Both father and son—who often talk like a double act, finishing each other's sentences and feeding each other jokes—go into an elaborate head-scratching routine. Graham eventually volunteers a tank of piranha fish—"I always wanted one but we never had the space before". Keith says innocently that he can't think of anything. How about that enormous gold watch clunking round his wrist like a handcuff? "Oh that," he says, looking down at it in surprise as if some genie had just popped it on him. "I bought that yesterday. It's a Rolex." Cost? "Er—£4,750. But you see," he goes on, "most of my diving friends have had those for years. I could have had one ages ago if I'd wanted to blow all my money, but I didn't because I wanted to put it into the Edinburgh. And now I can buy a dozen watches if I want."

For years, the Jessops have had to put up with the jokes of acquaintances who "thought we were kind of fairytales". Everyone knew that North Sea divers could earn as much as £1,000 a week, so what were the Jessops doing living in a poky ex-council house? They were Keighley's local resident nutters, the people who talked about finding five tons of gold. "So now there's a lot of people round with egg on their face," Graham says.

Asked if the money has actually made them happier, they both grit their teeth and put on phoney grins. "Of course it's made us happy. We Have Been Happy," they say in unison. Then in an undertone to Graham, Keith murmurs: "Have we been happy at all since we got back? We've had more rows these past weeks . . ."

"Time to go, Dad," Graham warns and they get into the car.

"You could say," Keith shouts out of the window, "that the main difference now is that we can go out and buy a Porsche and not even ask the price."

"But we do ask the price," adds, Graham, "because we like a few bob knocking off!"

And they roar off through the park, convulsed with laughter, knowing a parking place awaits. ●