

MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

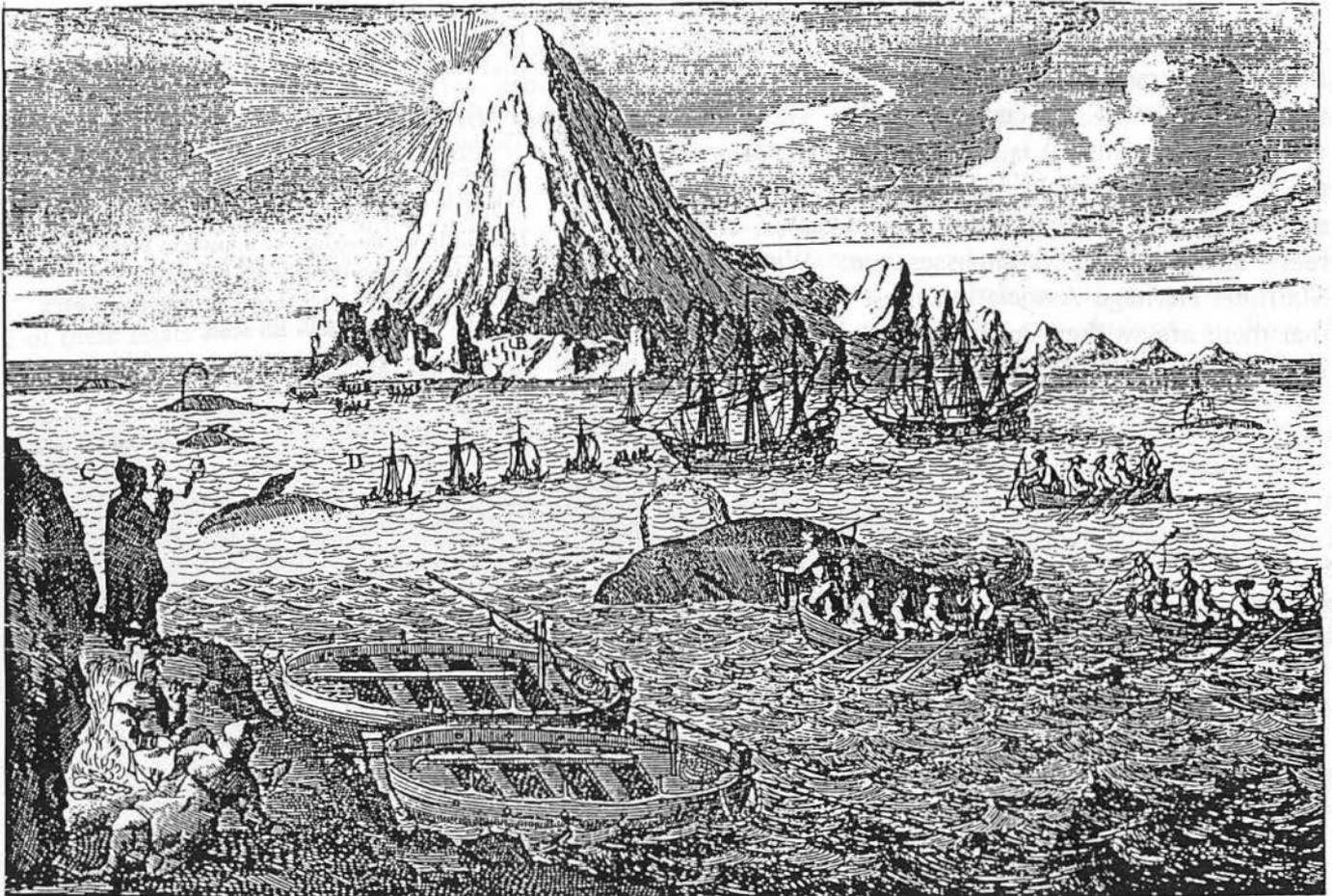
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THE MANNER OF CATCHING WHALES.

From an engraving in Monck's "Account of a most dangerous Voyage to Greenland," in "Churchill's Voyages," Vol. 1, London, 1744.

EDITORIAL

Thankyou to everyone who sent contributions for the Journal. Not all can be fitted into this issue but be assured that they will be published in future editions. This does not mean that you can sit back and relax! More articles, snippets for the Ditty Bag, drawings, book reviews, photographs, etc. are required for forth- coming issues. Jill Worsley has promised the second part of her Short History Of Diving for the December issue.

Readers will remember Mike Igglesden's series of articles on the restoration of *Oriel* in this journal a few years ago. Brian Lemon, the well known model maker, has made a model of this 18' gaffer and had an article he wrote on the construction of this small replica published in the prestigious Model Shipwright magazine (No. 103). Brian has kindly given permission for the MHA to republish his paper in our Journal.

A marvellous exhibition of quilts with an OCEAN theme was arranged at Claremont Showgrounds by the WA. Quilters' Association in July. The theme was chosen because it is the International Year of the Ocean, and many of the 345 works on exhibition were interpretations of seascapes, coral reefs, animals, boats, compasses, etc. We in the Maritime Heritage Association must keep in mind that there are workers in diverse media who have interests in our research area.

IN MEMORY OF ELI DODGE, WHO WAS KILLED BY A WHALE,

Sept. 4, 1858, off the Coast of New Holland.

COMPOSED AT SEA,
BY HENRY GOODING.

He has gone from our gaze, he'll never more return,
A shipmate we all did revere,
We no more of him, our duty will learn,
No more with us, will he make cheer.

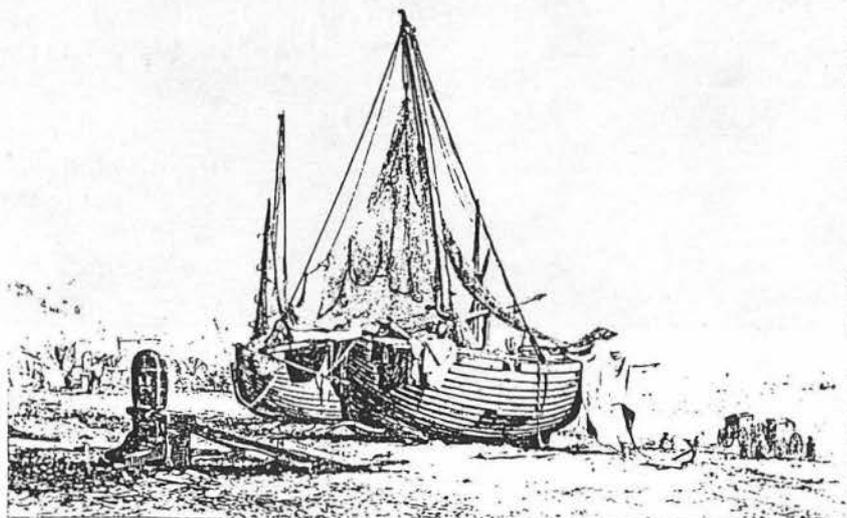
He had perhaps a dear cottage home,
Or maybe a sister or a brother,
Who knows but a wife,
The joy of his life.
A child, or a fond loving mother.

He was brave in the storm,
He was kind in the calm,
His duty he done like a man,
But now he is free from this world's alarms.
And safe moor'd in the Spirit land.

He oftimes with us did the monster pursue,
The huge monster king of the deep,
But now he is gone, and his journey is through,
Where loud billow's roll he does sleep.

How little we thought, but a moment before,
When near us he bravely did contend,
With the huge monster then weltering in its gore.
That he would to hades Eli send.

But he's gone from our gaze, his long race is run,
In death's cold embrace he does lie,
Yet Father of Mercies Thy will be done,
And take his soul to Thee on High.



Brighton fishing boats on the beach.

Oriel

A Small Motor-sailer



by Brian Lemon

Among the thirty to forty entries in the Classic Wooden Boat Show at Fremantle, Western Australia, in 1994, one particular small motor-sailer caught my eye. Her name was *Oriel*.

Oriel was a clinker-built, gunter-rigged sloop, measuring 18ft 0in x 6ft 6in x 3ft 9in with the centre-board down. She was built, with nine others of the same design, by Thornycroft at their Tanjong Dhu yard in Singapore between 1949 and 1951. All the hulls were built of teak. Surprisingly, there are two more of these boats here in Western Australia, the *Senang* and the *Mar-*

garet. When her present owner purchased *Oriel* in 1988 she was in a sorry state. No decking, the centre-board corroded and solid in its casing. Some frames and planking damaged, and several other problems and defects.

Three years of dedicated work has produced a magnificent Classic little wooden motor-sailer. The motor, a Stuart Turner P55 two-stroke, was rebuilt from about four others, and pushes her along at a respectable speed. The sail area is approximately 160 square feet.

The more I looked at the boat, the more I became convinced that she

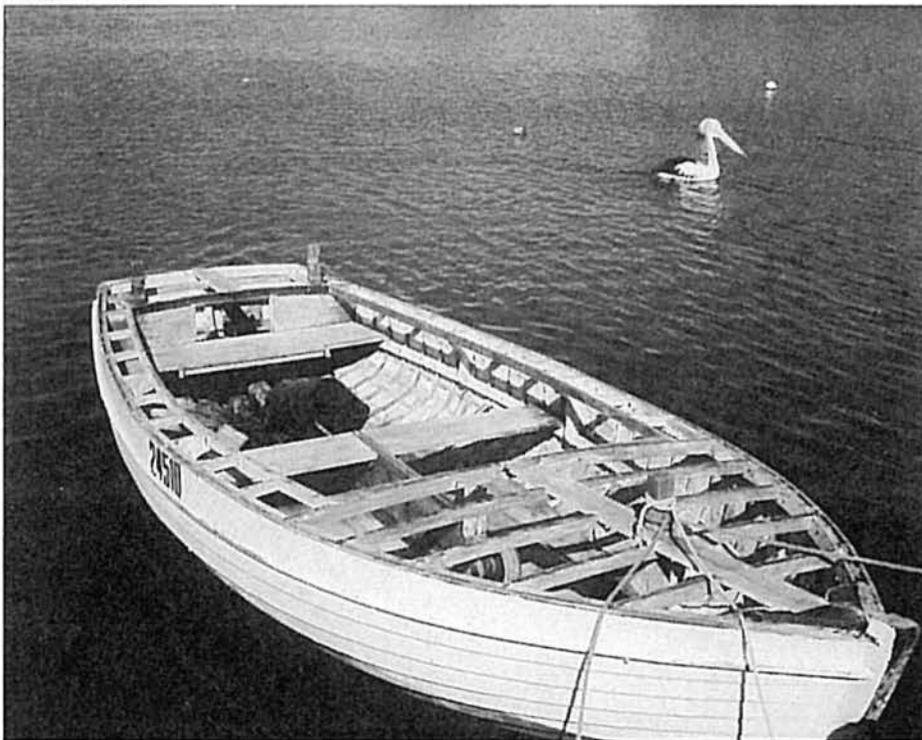
would make a fine model. A few words with the owner and the seed was sown.

The model

As *Oriel* was only 18ft long, and the model was for static display, it was decided to build it to a scale of 1 1/2in = 1ft 0in (1/8). This gave a hull length of 27in. The keel was laid and eight frames plus transom were glued to it. No 5 frame was central to the part of the keel which would have to be removed later to make way for the centreplate. I cut out this section and then wedged it back in place with a strengthening piece glued either side of this area, but not to the cut piece itself.

There were eleven planks each side. The positions of all these planks were marked on the stem, transom and all frames. Working upside down, planking was started, beginning from each side of the keel. Each plank was glued along the overlap, but not to the frames, to which they were just clamped. When planking was completed, the frames were cut through at floor level, whereupon they literally fell out. The two wedges at the ends of the centreplate area were taken out and no. 5 frame and the cut section of the keel came away, leaving the slot in the keel for the centreplate. The basic hull was now complete. The small amount of each frame left glued to the keel would become a central support for the flooring. The top of the hull each side was slightly trimmed to obtain the final sheer line.

The next step was to position some thirty frames (timbers) between the keel and the deck level. These comprised lengths of 1.5mm ply, 1/8in wide, cut across the grain so that they could be bent to the shape of the hull. Each was glued and pinned to the hull. When the framing had been completed the external rubbing strakes were fitted, running from the stem to the transom. By now the hull was becoming quite rigid and strong. Attention was



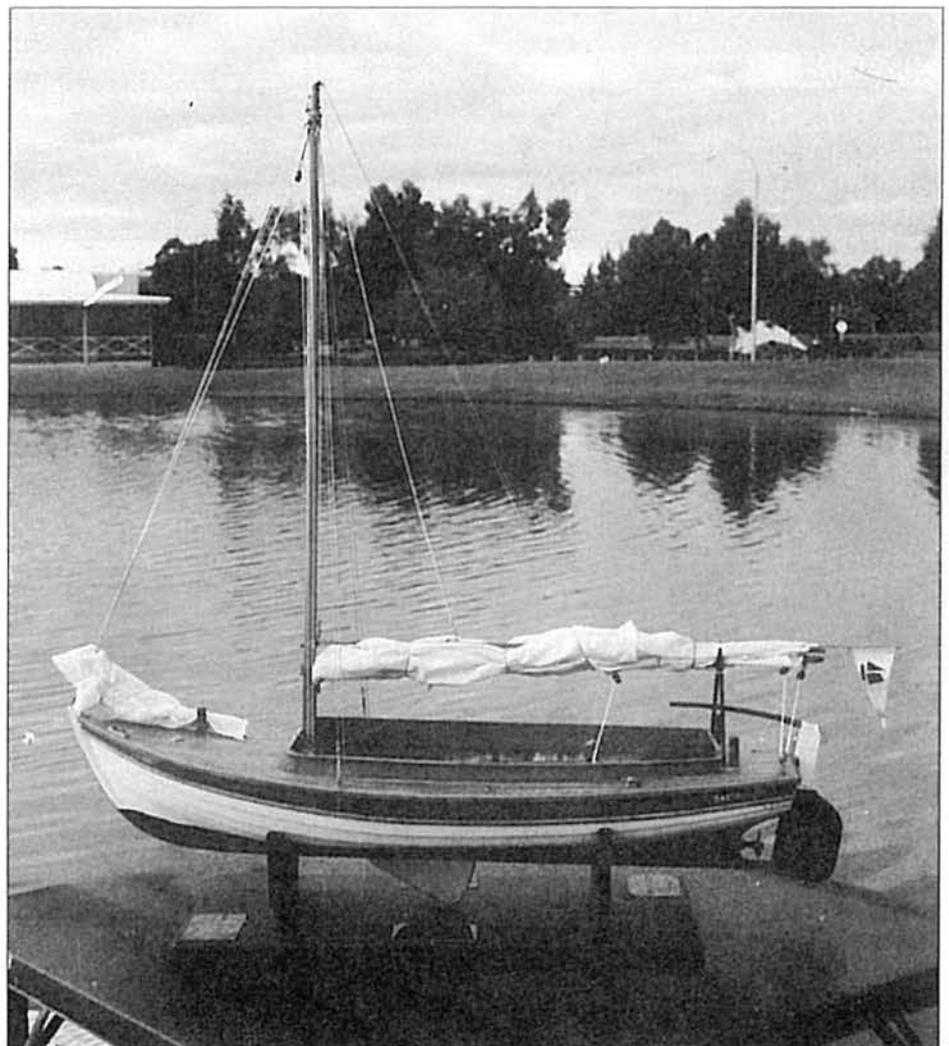
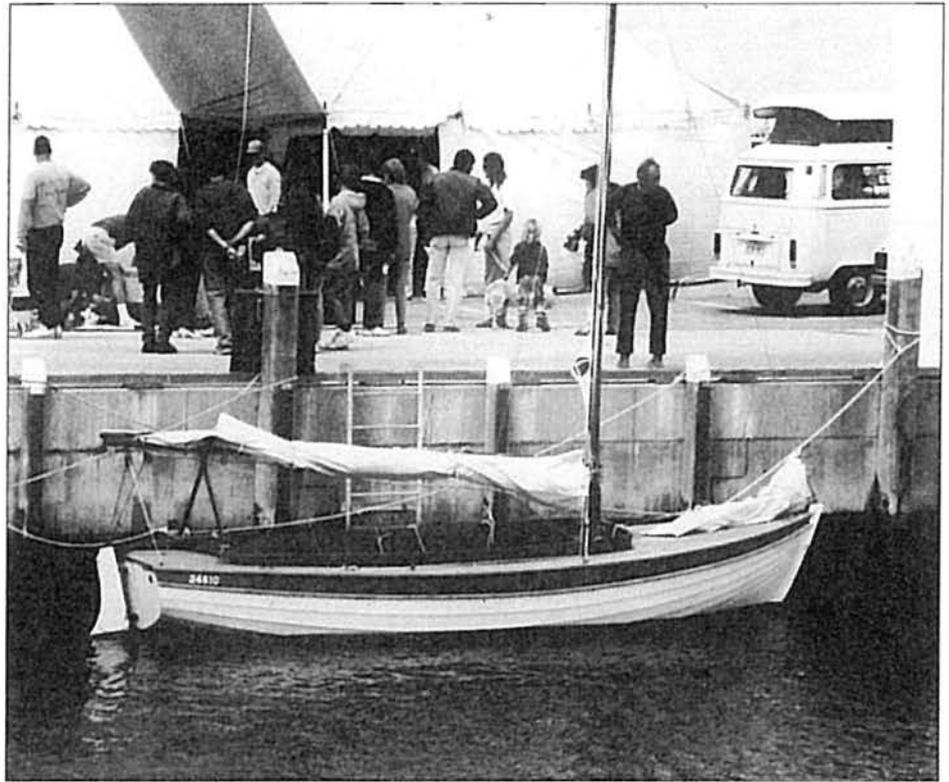
Oriel as purchased in 1988.

Oriel after restoration.

now turned to making some of the internal details, since it would be impossible to do so once the decking was in place. A 4mm dia hole was drilled through the sternpost to take the propeller shaft tube. The propeller would be 24mm dia, three-bladed, in bronze. The next step was to construct the centreboard box. Once this had been completed the flooring was built up with individual planks to form a single piece. Both the floor and the centreplate box can be lifted out if necessary. The seats and shelving under the forward deck section were added, and the pulley system for lowering and raising the centreplate were tackled. To make sure that the system would work satisfactorily, a wooden template of the centreplate was made and the system tested with this. When satisfied that all was in order, a proper centreplate was cut from a piece of 2.5mm aluminium plate. On the prototype the plate is a piece of galvanised steel plate.

The model of the Stuart engine was built from pieces of wood and brass sections, and the flywheel was a modified clock spring container. A hole was drilled right through the engine block to take the propeller shaft, which was connected to the flywheel. When the propeller was turned by hand the flywheel rotated.

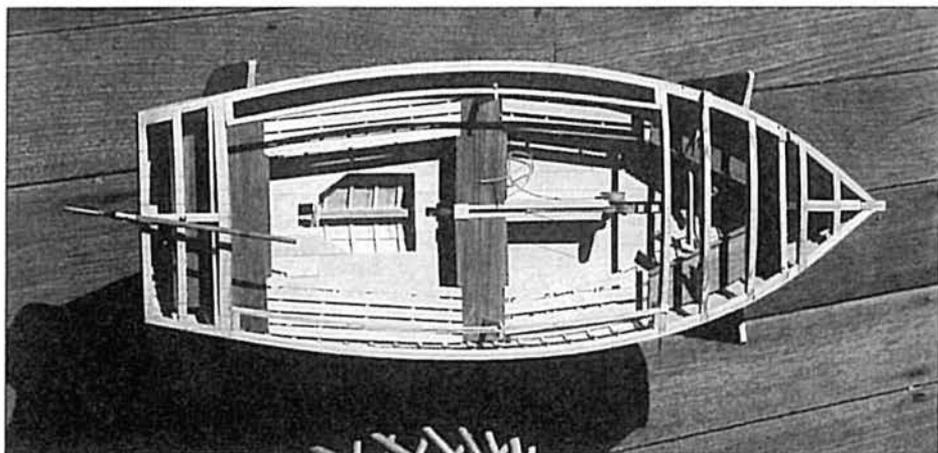
After making the stern seat and locker, the bilge pump was constructed. This was situated on the starboard side adjacent to the after end of the seat, but tucked under the deck. On the original boat this is covered with a wooden panel, but on the model this was replaced by a piece of Perspex, so that the pump could be seen. A length of flexible hose runs from under the floor to the inlet on the pump, while a second length runs from the pump outlet to pass through the transom. On the original vessel the engine cover was



The completed model of *Oriel*.

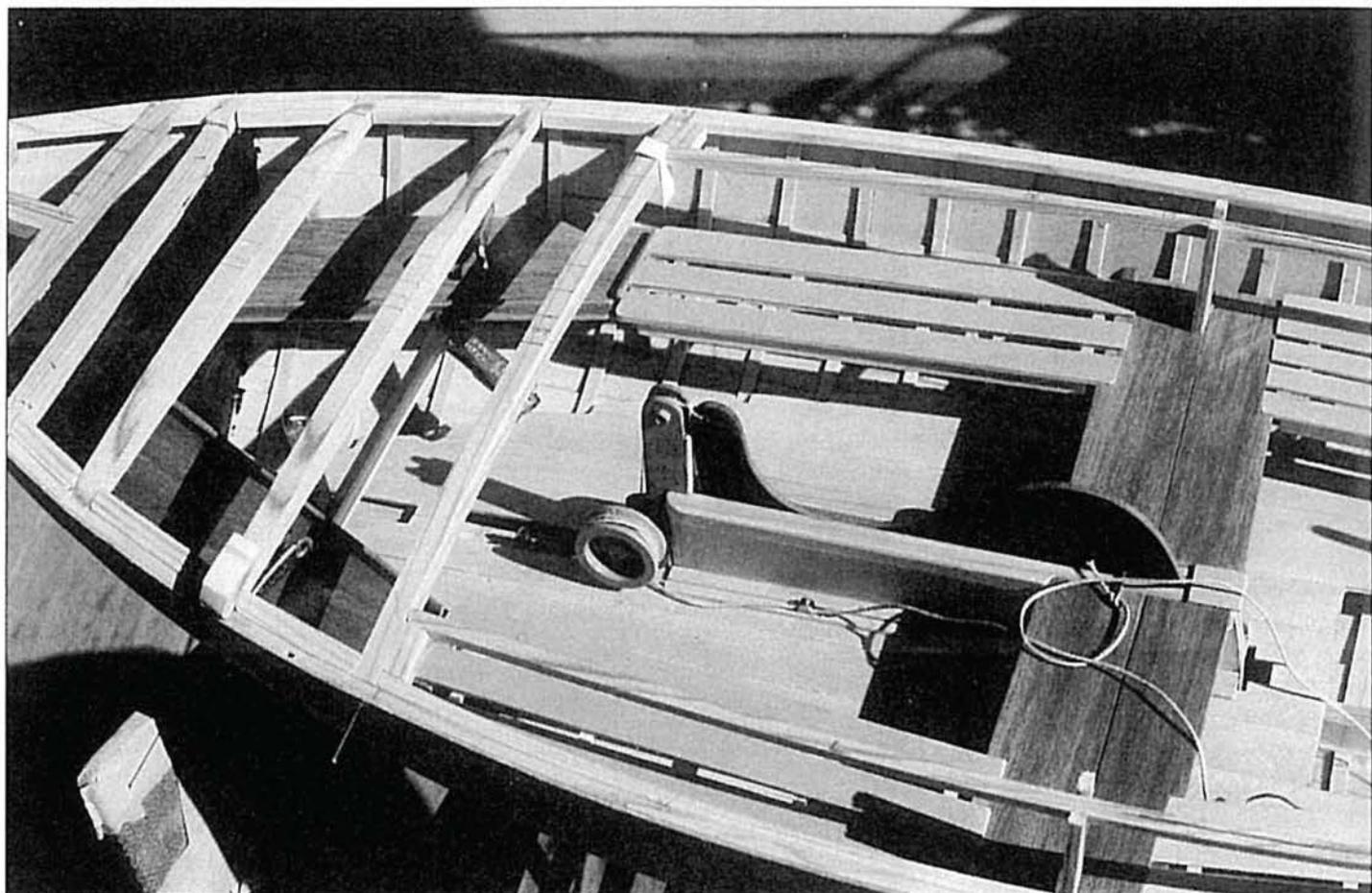


The basic hull finished, with rudder temporarily in place.



lined (insulated) with tinfoil. For the model the cover was made in two sections, lined with aluminium foil to represent the tinfoil insulation. Either the top of the cover can be lifted off, or the whole box removed to allow the engine to be seen. The forward handle is the starting handle and the after one the forward/reverse lever. The rudder and removable tiller came next. On *Oriel* the rudder could be lowered if need be below the line of the keel to give better steering control when under sail. To make sure that everything worked I made a temporary rudder. When satisfied that all was well I made the one to go on the model. As with the

A birdseye view of the model showing the completed interior; note the engine bay and centreplate case. No teak staining or varnishing started.



The centreplate template in position. Note the formers for the decking put temporarily in place.

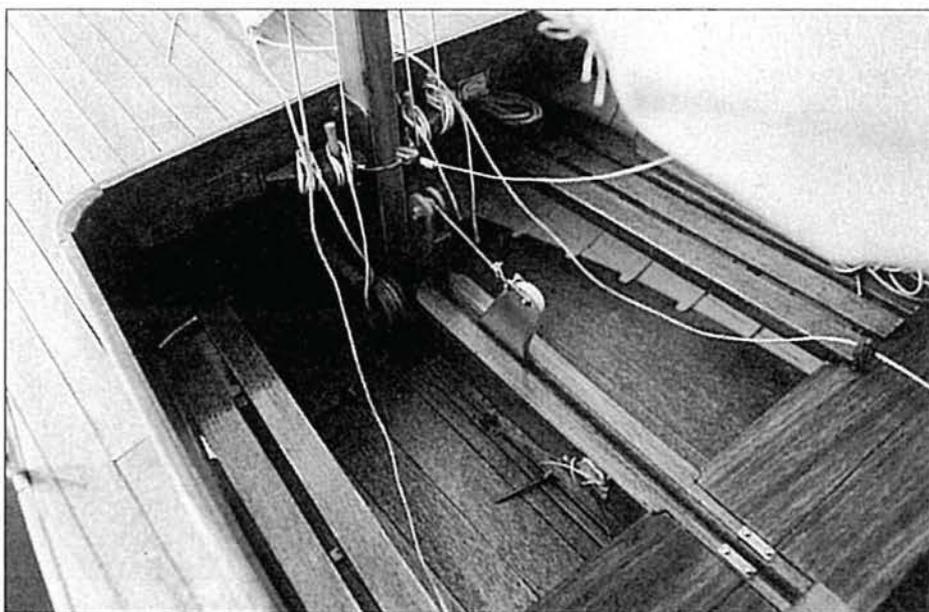
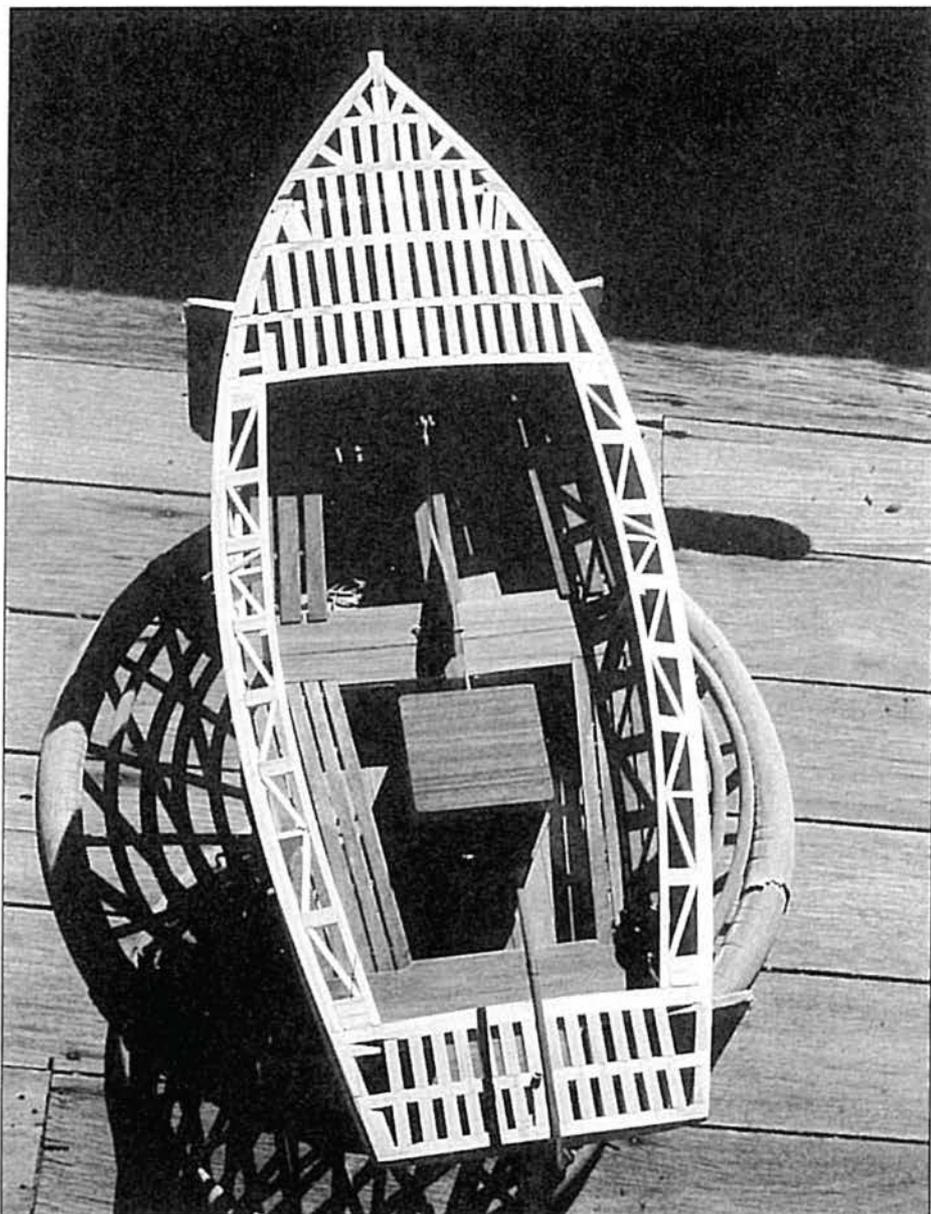
Interior completed, engine cover in place.
Note the supports for the deck planking.

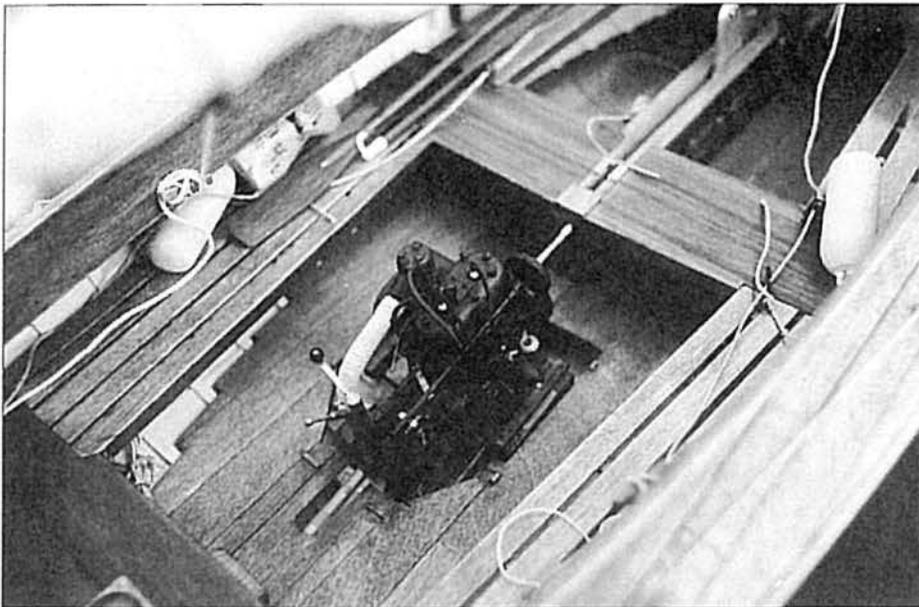
prototype, this rudder can be removed completely by withdrawing the long metal pin.

The whole of the interior was painted in colours to match those of the original vessel, and varnished. That done, I was able to start on fitting the framing for the deck. When in place the positions for the deck planking were carefully marked on it. The deck planks were marked out with the aid of a jig. Before each one was fitted the top edge was slightly chamfered, rubbed with a 6B pencil to simulate the caulking. The coaming was made and fitted, and then the whole hull was given a final sanding, after which painting began. First the whole hull was given four coats of white undercoat except for those areas which were to be varnished. These were followed by three coats of powder blue. When dry the hull was masked at waterline level and three coats of anti-fouling applied to the lower hull.

Various small fittings were made and fitted, including fairleads, samson posts, sculling oar with its rowlock, the two belaying pin rails complete with their pins, which were fitted one each side of the mast, the exhaust and bilge pump outlets in the transom. Also made at this time were five wooden blocks, four lifebuoys, and two fenders. There are two brass plates on the forward coaming. The one on the port side is the builders nameplate, and that on the starboard side states that the boat won the trophy for the Best Old Gaffer at the 1993 Classic Wooden Boat Show. On the inside of the after coaming is the name ORIEL. The letters, 4mm high, were carved with a scalpel, but the O was done with a leather punch. On the centre of the after seat is a fully working marine compass 15mm in diameter. In the

Detail at the base of the mast. Note belaying pin rails, finished centreplate fitted with raising/lowering tackle.



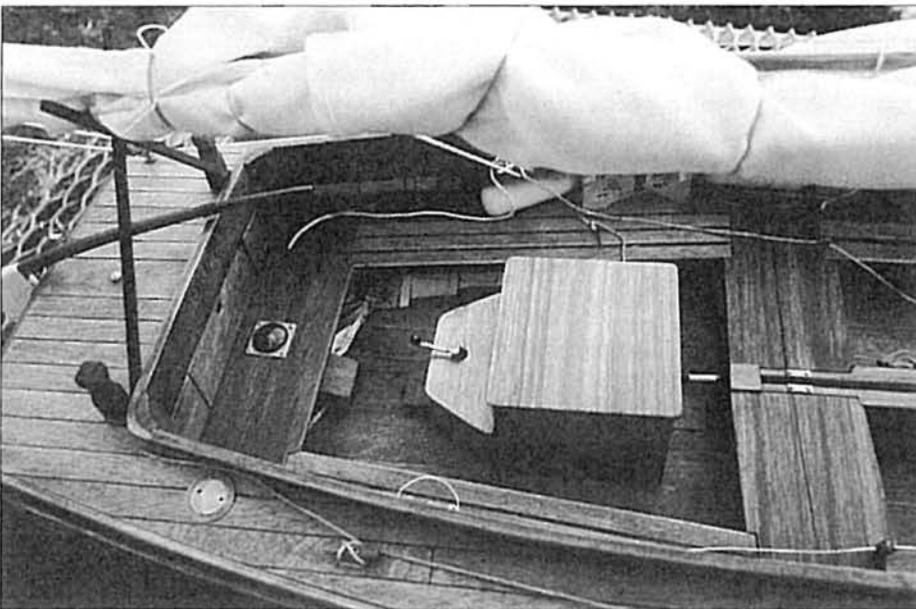


The Stuart Turner engine fitted in place.

middle of the after deck is a small sheave which allows the rudder support rope to move slightly with the rudder up and steering in shallow water. On the port side of the forward samson post is the fuel filler cap, and on the starboard side aft is a cap which when unscrewed exposes the bilge pump access.

The mast is 18ft high from keel to truck, and the boom and gaff are 12ft long. The mast shrouds and the forestay are trace wire, and the rest of the rigging is rope of appropriate sizes. The sails are correctly shaped and stitched, but remain permanently furled. All the rigging attachments are correct with thimbles and shackles. The anchor and sundry ropes are stowed under the fore deck, and the anchor chain lies in a channel on the starboard side of the centreplate box.

The model is mounted on a sheoak baseboard in such a way that it can be removed and displayed on a model of the boat's trailer which *Oriel's* owner has made. □



The completed after end, with engine cover in place. The starting handle can be seen between the front of the cover and the thwart, with the engine control handle at the after end. Note the compass set in the after thwart.



This view of the model shows to advantage the fine sheer of the hull and lines of the bow.



After end of the model, showing the shape of the transom, with exhaust and bilge pump outlets. *Photographs by the author.*

The Ditty Bag

An occasional collection of nautical trivia to inform, astound, amuse and inspire.

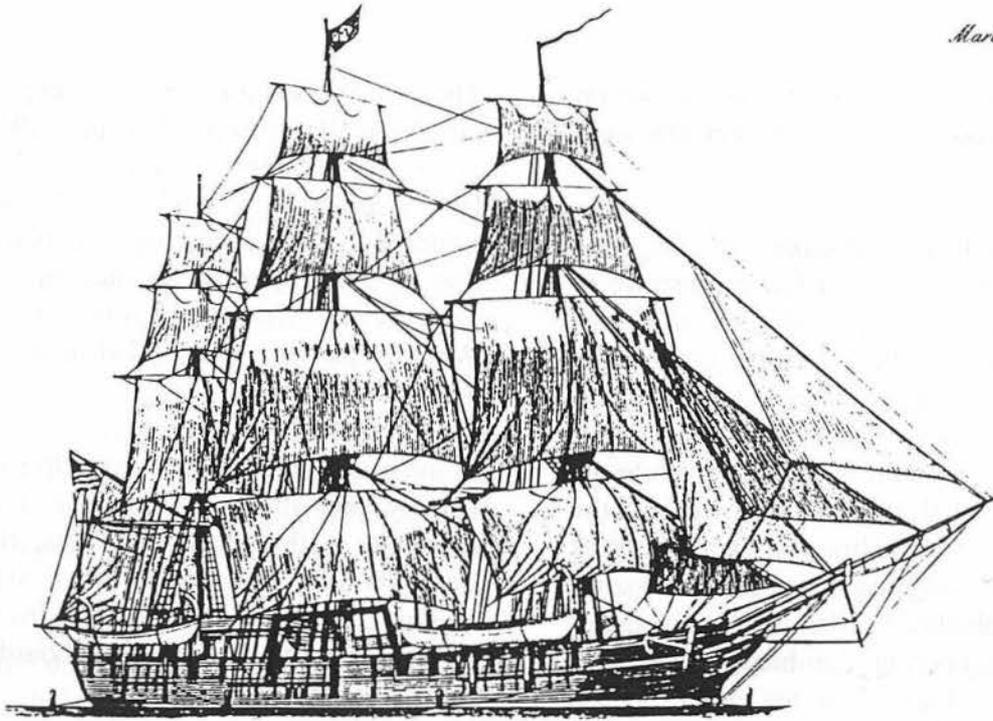
- "It is interesting to learn that in building a 380 ton brig-of-war nine men found employment during a year." (First decade of 19th century).
- A recipe for tanning sails:-
"Put in a copper 5 gallons of the best raw linseed oil and 1¼ lbs of beeswax. Heat it until it begins to boil. Then gradually add 20 lbs Venetian red ochre and 10 lbs "light purple brown" ochre, and boil for five minutes, stirring all the time. When cool enough, add 10 gallons of the best paraffin lamp oil. Spread the dry sails on a clean floor or clean shingle beach. *Keep the contents of the copper continuously stirred.* Brush it on both sides of the sail with a large paint scrubber, working the mixture well into the tablings. The sails should be temporarily bent to spars and hung up to dry in an open shed. Two days later they should be moved a little so that the oil does not settle in one place. They must be well ventilated while drying: if left in a heap only for a few hours they may become heated, and rot. After a fortnight they may be spread in the sun to complete the drying process. These quantities will be sufficient for 800 or 900 square feet of No. 6 flax canvas, or for 1200 square feet of cotton of equivalent weight."
- **Full and by.** Sailing as near wind as possible with sails full; in square-rigged vessel, with yards braced sharp up.
- **Royal Fishes.** Whales, dolphins and sturgeon which were stranded on the shores of Great Britain were, by a statute of 1324, *De praerogative regis*, claimed as royal and were the exclusive property of the sovereign. This royal right was only renounced in 1971.
- Until 1972 the official name for Drummond's Cove, just north of Geraldton, was Smugglers' Cove, believed to be named for the illicit trade



carried on between locals and American whalers last century.

- Some Italian armourers in the 16th century 'for the sake of beauty were engraving and decorating not only the guns but even the gunshots, knowing perfectly well that this was detrimental to the efficiency of their artillery.'
- Readers will have heard of the recent discovery of a French coin and an old bottle on the north coast of Dirk Hartog Island. These are reputed to have been left there by the French 16 gun ship *Gros Ventre* under the command of St. Allouarn when Western Australia was claimed by the French on 30 March 1772. It is interesting to note that St. Allouarn himself did not go ashore. He was not well and in fact died soon after his return to Mauritius on 27 September 1772, age 35. Western Australia was claimed for France by Ensign Migault. The map showing the position of the anchored ship and the spot where the bottle and coins (two were supposed to have been buried) was drawn by Ensign Francois Etienne Rosily Mesros, who later became director of the Hydrographic Office of the French Navy.





The whaler *Charles W. Morgan* of New Bedford. 1841.
Note the cutting in stage topped up between the whaleboats on the starboard side.

WHALESHIPS AND WHALING

In a previous article for the Journal I gave a brief description of the whaleboats that evolved during the age of whaling under sail and how they reached their peak to become almost standardised around the world. In this article I will write about the whaleships which carried these boats and roamed the world's oceans in the search for the extraordinary wealth that whaling brought to many during the heyday of whaling during the last part of the 18th century and threequarters of the 19th century.

Whales have been eaten by man since at least 10,000BC. Originally whales cast up on the beach were easily come by but were an unreliable source of food and oil. By the 8th century whale hunting, as distinct from 'scavenging,' was being carried out by the Basques in shore based small boats around the Bay of Biscay. This was highly organised with lookout towers dotted along the shores. The Basques may have been the first to go to sea in larger vessels hunting the whale. The over exploitation of whales in the Bay of Biscay and surrounding waters resulted in the Basques going as far afield as North America during the 16th century. Three wrecks discovered in Red Bay Labrador are Basque whalers. One, the *San Juan*, (250 tons) dragged her anchors and ran aground in 1565. The *San Juan* did not hunt whales as a true whaler but transported the men, whaleboats, barrels, etc. to the Labrador and Newfoundland coasts where shore based hunting in whaleboats and shore based

tryworks were set up. She carried the oil, men and equipment back to Europe.

The discovery of the whales and walrus around Spitzbergen by Willem Barents in 1596 induced the Dutch to enter the trade. They knew little about the hunting of whales and sought help from the Basques. The English also commenced whaling and there was great rivalry between them and the Dutch. Gradually they worked westward from Spitzbergen to cover most of the high latitudes of the North Atlantic. By the mid 17th century the Basques had been almost eliminated from whaling by the Dutch and English.

During this early period of offshore whaling the blubber was removed, cut up and packed in barrels for rendering into oil back on shore. In many cases these shore based tryworks were set up on some suitable coast near the whaling grounds. It was not

until the early 1750s that trying was carried out on board whalers. It appears that the Americans were the first to do this.

The earliest record of offshore whaling by Americans that I can find is of a fortunate storm in 1712 which drove a small Nantucket sloop skippered by Christopher Hussey far out beyond the normal coastal whaling area. Here he found a great herd of sperm whales, killed one, lashed it alongside and managed to bring it home. While the right whale was essentially a coast follower and the previous target of coast whaling, this was the start of true offshore whaling after the pelagic sperm whale, the most valuable whale. Not only did it provide oil from rendering the blubber but also spermaceti, an oil contained in the whale's head which hardened on being exposed to air and could be made into the very best long burning, smokeless candles. A large whale could hold up to 500 gallons of this oil.

The island of Nantucket became, for about 80 years, the whaling capital of America, and possibly the world. It was from here that the major push to hunt sperm whale was undertaken in the early 1700s. The need for larger ships necessary to undertake prolonged voyages to the Pacific whaling grounds shifted the centre of whaling from Nantucket to New Bedford. This was because the larger vessels could not cross the sandbar at the mouth of the harbour on Nantucket. 'Camels' were used to lift some of the larger ships over the bar but they still could not compete with New Bedford ships. By the early 19th century America was dominant in whaling, based mainly around New Bedford and to a lesser extent Nantucket Island. Voyages could last for years and ships went to all the oceans of the world. The Pacific however became the pre-eminent ocean because of the vast number of sperm whales and their value.

Over the years the whale ships evolved into fairly specialised vessels. They were, on the whole, not particularly graceful nor as fast as many of the other sailing ships of the time. When the search for whales expanded from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the ships had to stay at sea for longer periods. This necessitated the ability to carry large quantities of stores and water, a number of long, fast whaleboats and a fairly large crew to man these boats as well as the ability to try out the whale on board then store the oil.

These 19th century whalers were not particularly large, usually between 250 and 400 tons although there were some smaller brigs and brigantines. Later schooners were also used. Many were ship rigged but most were rigged as barques because of that rig's ability to be handled by fewer men when most of the crew were away in the whaleboats. Whaleships were quite distinctive in appearance and fittings.

Some of these differences were in such things as the usually very strong construction, the large number of davits with their whaleboats, the tryworks on deck (usually covered with a wood or canvas awning), the heavy tackle hung from the mainmast to lift the cut pieces of whale aboard and the cutting in stage on the starboard side.

They were not fast, elegant or famous like many contemporary clipper ships and packet ships. They were utilitarian, burdensome, but seaworthy and, in many cases, very, very profitable for their owners. In 1857 the whalers of New Bedford earned \$6,000,000. This for a town with a population of only 2,000. Many whale ships repaid their owners their original cost in the first voyage. Few other ships could claim this.

The *Charles W. Morgan* is a typical whale ship of this period. As she is still afloat at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut we can find out a great deal about a whale ship's construction, rig, fittings and methods of whaling. Many ships' logs from the whaling days have also survived and they add to the knowledge we have of this era.

The *Charles W. Morgan* was built at Fairhaven near New Bedford in 1841. She was 105.6 feet long, a breadth of 27.7 feet and a depth of 17.6 feet. She was originally ship rigged and of 351 registered tons. In 1867 she was re-rigged as a barque with double topsails and her tonnage reduced to 313.75. After her retirement she was re-rigged as a three masted ship, originally in a sand dock at South Dartmouth, Massachusetts but now afloat at Mystic Seaport.

Although most of her voyages were to the Pacific Ocean she hunted whales in the Atlantic, Arctic, and Indian Oceans during her 80 years of service in the whaling industry. Because of the danger of ice in the high latitudes she was originally fitted with 4

feet of reinforcing oak around her bows. This was later removed.

One whole season in 1916 was spent in the Kerguelen Islands in the southern Indian Ocean hunting elephant seals for their oil. She visited Hobart and New Zealand ports during some of her 37 voyages but I do not know whether she ever visited Fremantle or Albany during her time in the Indian Ocean. It is interesting to note that at one time while in Australian waters she took on as crew George Parkinson Christian, the great-grandson of Fletcher Christian of the *Bounty* mutiny. He served on the *Charles W. Morgan* for 25 years. Her first voyage of 3 years and 4 months yielded 1600 barrels of sperm oil, 800 barrels of whale oil and 10,000 lbs of whalebone. Her second voyage saw her return with 2270 barrels of oil. Her most successful voyage ended in May 1863 when she brought home 1935 barrels having earlier in that trip sent home 2280 barrels. Altogether she earned \$2,000,000 during her working life.

Typical of most whaling ships she had five wooden davits on her sides. There were three on the port side and two on the starboard for carrying the whaleboats. On the hull below the davits were the fenders which were vertical timbers running from deck level to waterline which acted to protect both hull and whaleboats when the latter were being lowered or raised. These were a common and distinctive feature of whaleships. The starboard waist was left clear because here was located the cutting in stage where whales were flensed and the pieces hauled up to be tried. The cutting in stage was a scaffolding fastened to the ship's side enabling the crew to stand above the whale and cut it into pieces to take on board. When not in use it was topped up against the shrouds. A large opening gangway in the bulwark here simplified hauling large pieces such as a sperm whale's head on board.

The *Charles W Morgan* was basically flush decked, with just a small house at the stern. Between this and the mainmast was the midship shelter on top of which were stored two more whaleboats, often older or damaged ones. Also in the stern was the 'shincracker' steering wheel. This was a steering wheel mounted on the tiller so that it moved from side to side with the movement of the tiller. This was fairly common on American whalers but uncommon on other vessels.

Between the main and foremasts were the try works, two large iron try pots set in a brick fireplace. Each pot held 250 gallons. This fireplace was itself set in the 'duck pond', a brick, water filled trough which kept the heat from the deck. This area was also covered by a shelter. Alongside the tryworks was a large tank into which the oil was bailed to cool prior to it being put in the casks. Always on the deck was the large grindstone for sharpening the harpoons, lances and boat spades used for cutting up the whales.

Whalers had an intermediate class of crew not found on other sailing ships - the harpooners. These specialists were above the normal crew but below the officers, having their own quarters just forward of those of the mates. The crew lived in the crowded forecabin, the officers and harpooners in the stern. The casks to hold the whale oil were in most cases transported as staves and barrel hoops so that more could be carried than if they were already assembled. The cooper made the barrels as required and this meant that once a ship had a full cargo of oil she could send this back home with another ship. With more barrels ready to put together she could go whaling again without having to undertake the long journey home. An excellent example of this is the *McEvoy* of New Bedford which was saved from being broken up after being condemned, and sent to the Pacific in 1848. She took 2800 barrels of oil in 55 days and sent 1800 barrels of this plus 40,000 lbs of whalebone to London. Later she obtained a further 2500 barrels of oil and sold this in San Francisco before returning home.

Re-victualling was carried out at any one of a number of places in Australia and around the oceans in which a ship went whaling. This business of supplying stores to whalers was a profitable one for many small ports, including a number on the coast of Western Australia.

Along the ship's side were painted a series of mock gun ports, although there were no cannons carried aboard. They were there purely as a deterrent to would be attackers. However these did not deter the attack on the *Charles W. Morgan* by Pacific Islanders in 1850. The attack was beaten off with lances, boat spades and a shotgun.

The *Charles W. Morgan's* last whaling voyage ended in 1921 but she was not the last whaling ship

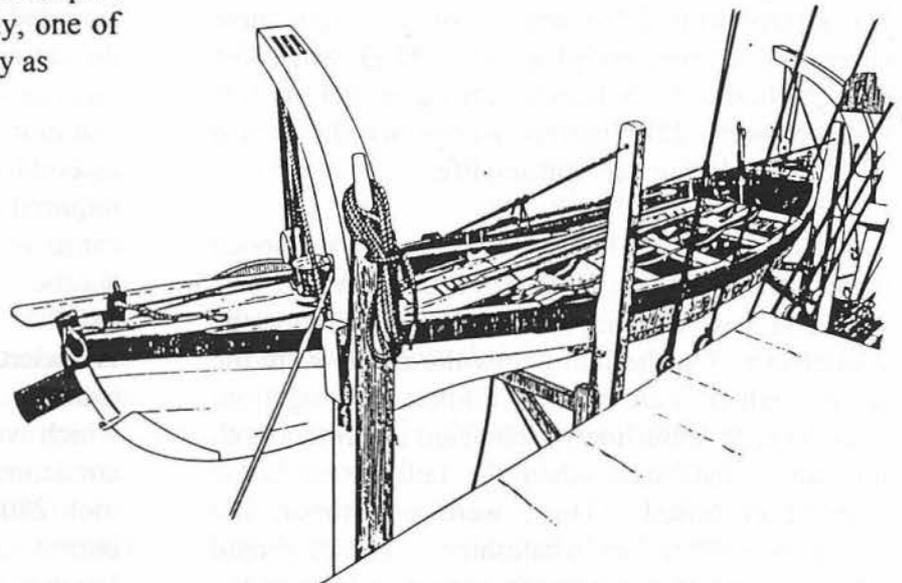
to undertake a whaling voyage. The *Wanderer*, the last full-rigged whaler to sail from an American port left New Bedford on 25 August 1924, she was wrecked just 13 miles away the next day! The last American sailing whaler was the schooner *John R. Manta* which sailed in 1925, bringing oil back from that voyage, her last as a whaler. Whaling under sail was a hard trade on both ships and men but it earned some vast profits for owners and officers.

Whalers were some of the early visitors to Australian shores and were deeply involved in its early history. In Western Australia the exploits of the New Bedford whaler *Catalpa* in 1876 are reasonably well known. She was especially chartered for a long cruise at a cost of \$25,000 and sent to the W.A. coast for the rescue of six Fenians. On her outward journey she caught whales as part of her deception plan. John Boyle O'Reilly, one of the original seven Fenians sent to the colony as

convicts, escaped from Bunbury aboard another New Bedford whaler, the *Gazelle*, in 1869. It was O'Reilly who suggested using a whaler to rescue his six remaining colleagues.

Another whaler well known in history was the *Terra Nova*. This is the barque which took Captain Robert Falcon Scott to the Antarctic in 1910 on his last, fateful exploration. The *Terra Nova* was built in 1884 as a whaler of 749 tons; "the biggest whaling ship afloat." She sailed to both the Arctic and Antarctica Oceans. The inherent strength built into whaleships made her an ideal vessel for such trips.

Whaleboat in davits.



Here is a quote from Herman Melville written in 1851 that may produce a reaction from some readers.

"That great America on the other side of the sphere, Australia, was given to the enlightened world by the whaleman. After its first blunder-born discovery by a Dutchman, all other ships long shunned those shores as pestiferously barbarous; but the whale-ship touched there. The whale-ship is the true mother of that now mighty colony. Moreover, in the infancy of the first Australian settlement, the emigrants were several times saved from starvation by the benevolent biscuit of the whale-ship luckily dropping an anchor in their waters."

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THE CATALPA



A noble whaleship and commander,
Was called the Catalpa, they say,
She came out to Western Australia,
And took six poor Fenians away.

Chorus:

*So come all you screw warders and jailers,
Remember Perth regatta day,
Take care of the rest of your Fenians,
Or the Yankees will steal them away.*

Seven long years had they served here
And seven long more had to stay,
For defending their own country, Old Ireland,
For that they were banished away.

Chorus:

You kept them in Western Australia
Till their hair began to turn grey,
When a Yank from the States of America
Came out here and stole them away.

Chorus:

Now all the Perth boats were a-racing,
And making short tacks for the spot;
But the Yankee she tacked into Fremantle,
And took the best prize of the lot.

Chorus:

The Georgette, armed with bold warriors,
Went out the poor Yanks to arrest,
But she hoisted her star-spangled banner,
Saying, "You'll not board me, I guess."

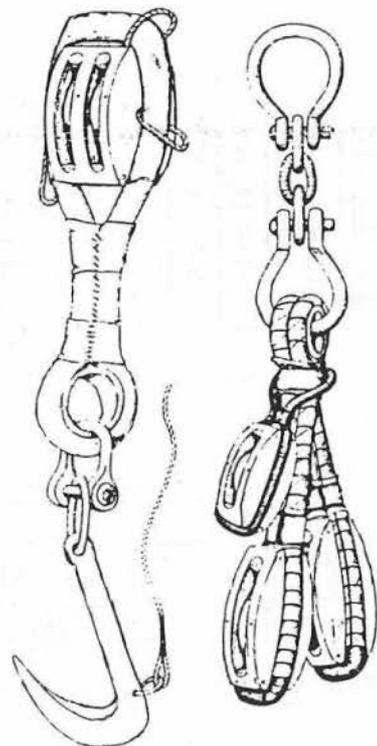
Chorus:

So remember those six Fenians colonial
And sing o'er these few verses with skill,
And remember the Yankee that stole them
And the home that they left on the hill.

Chorus:

Now they've landed safe in America
And there will be able to cry,
"Hoist up the green flag and shamrock,
Hurrah for old Ireland we'll die."

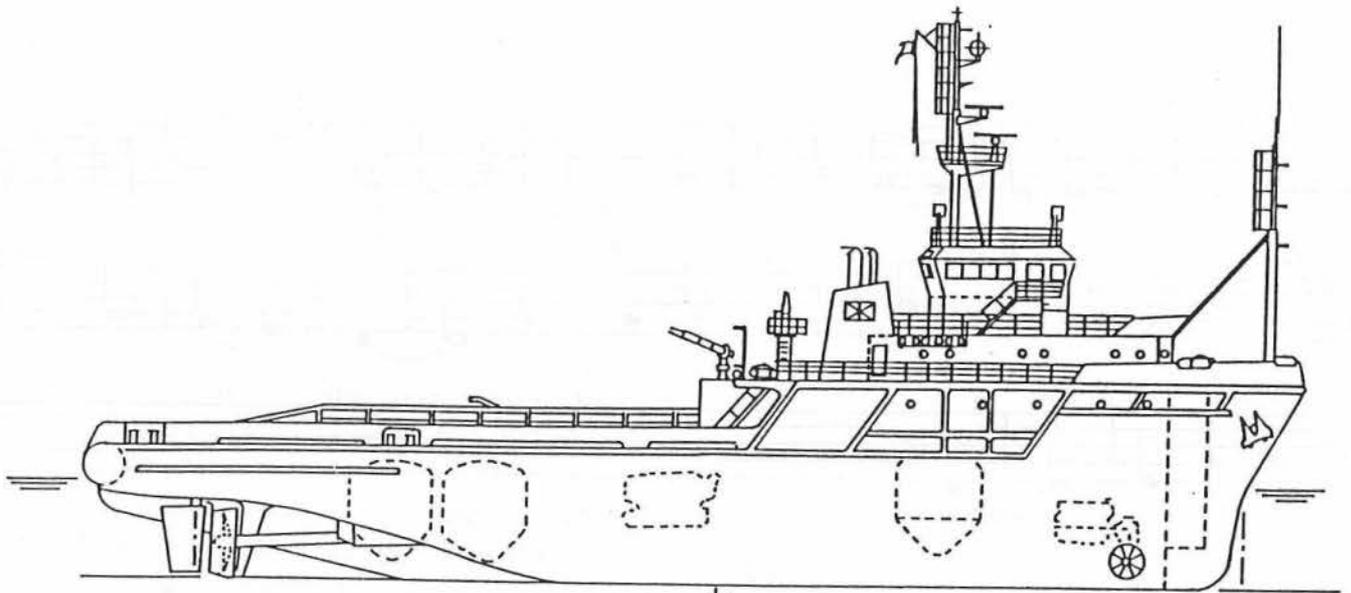
Chorus:



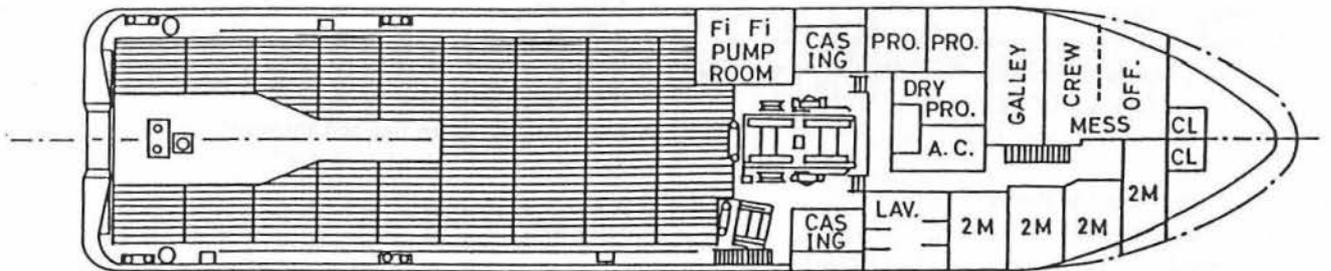
Blocks, etc.
of the cutting-in tackle
of an American whaler.
After A. Hyatt Verrill.
The real story of the
whaler. New York-Lon-
don, 1923.

6000 BHP ANCHOR HANDLING TUG SUPPLY VESSEL

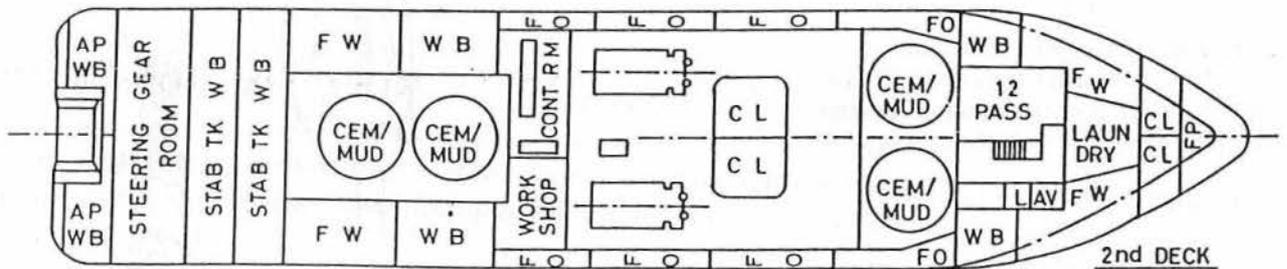
m.v. Pacific Chieftain



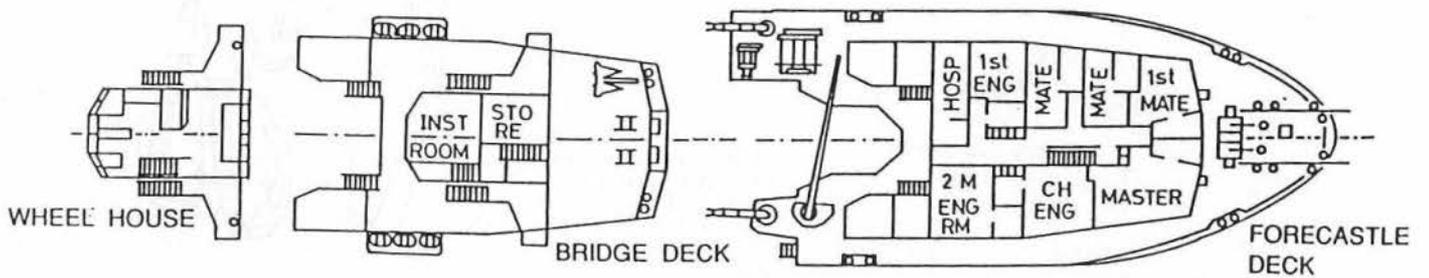
PROFILE



MAIN DECK



2nd DECK



Readers will remember the news of the damage to the Greek tanker Kirki off the coast here in 1991. The media reported daily on the fate of the ship, its load of oil and of the attempts to tow the vessel away from coastal areas where its cargo could contaminate Western Australia's coastline and fishing grounds. Thanks to a very fine effort by the various salvage and tug crews little damage to our seas occurred. This is how one participant in that effort saw it from close range. Pat Davies was mate on the Pacific Chieftain and the involvement of that vessel in the incident is told through Pat's diary of those days.

**SO MUCH FOR SINGAPORE RUN JOB
OR
RESCUE OF THE CRIPPLED TANKER KIRKI
by
Pat Davies
(Mate Pacific Chieftain)**

Prologue

The tanker Kirki had already been under tow firstly by the Lady Kathleen from off Lancelin until she ran low of diesel fuel and had to be replaced by the Lady Elizabeth who managed to get her main tow wire connected to the Kirki's stern and towed her north at about 3.5 knots. By this time the fire was out on the Kirki's bow but she was still slowly leaking oil from her forward tanks. The salvage team from United Salvage were slowly getting the various systems worked out under the command of David Hancocks and salvage equipment was being air lifted to Geraldton for transfer to the small tug from Fremantle, the "Wambiri". My ship, the Pacific Chieftain, an oil rig tender was in Dampier preparing for a redelivery voyage to Singapore. We had joined the vessel at 0830 hours that morning unaware of events which were unfolding down off Geraldton:-

Friday 26/8/91

Loaded bonded stores and food and cleared customs. Sailed at 1400 hrs, destination Singapore in 7 days. 3 watchkeepers onboard as it is a run job over 500 miles. Graham Anderson Master. Hans Skidzun run mate or 'guest arbiter' and myself as mate. So its four hours on and eight hours off watch and I get

the 0400 hours to 0800 hrs and 1600 hrs to 2000 hrs so at least I see the sunsets and sun rises for a change.

Saturday 27/8/91

Settling down to run trip routine. Weather is fine and clear and many plans are being made for our two days R and R in Singapore. At 0930 hours and 180 miles north of Dampier we receive radio orders to reverse course (from Swires man in Fremantle, Sam Pullan) and return to Dampier to load fuel and salvage equipment and head off South to assist the crippled tanker Kirki which is under tow in heavy seas south of Shark Bay off the West Australian coast.

Sunday 28/8/91

0700 hrs returned to the M.O.F. wharf Dampier with no bonded stores remaining! and no customs men there to readmit us to Australia. A busy day loaded 400,000 litres diesel fuel after a slight delay while lines of credit were established to B.P. Topped up all drill water tanks and sea fastened a deck cargo of salvage equipment pumps, hoses, life rafts, diving gear and the u'beaut Kitty Litter Oil Absorbent. Plus the United Salvage storeman Neill Todkill. Stores and gear arrived right up to sailing time. I hope we can remember where everything is stored as some of it had to go in the accommodation to keep dry. Sailed at 1600 via

Mermaid Strait and Mary Anne Passage for N.W. Cape and a rendezvous off Shark Bay with the Kirki.

Monday 29/8/91

0400 hours off N.W. Cape heading into southerly seas and swell at 11.5 knots. We have been told by the Kirki to meet the tug Wambiri in Shark Bay and transfer her deck cargo (which she brought out from Geraldton) to us using our deck crane, as the tug is rolling too much to effect gear transfer at sea. We should meet off Cape Inscription at 0800 hours tomorrow.

Tuesday 30/8/91

Arrived Cape Inscription at 0800 hours to see the tug Wambiri wallowing towards us, her decks awash. Hope her deck cargo is properly waterproofed. Wambiri followed us round Cape Inscription into Shark Bay but with the height of swell wrapping around the cape we have to shift ship right into the bay itself in order that we can use our crane in smooth waters and have maximum control over the decking of the salvage gear, some of which is 2.5 tonnes in weight and looks like it has had a good soaking on the Wambiri's deck. By 1400 hours cargo and personnel transfer completed the Wambiri heading back to Fremantle. They look quite happy to be off even though they face a two to three day bash into the southerly swells to get home. We head north up Shark Bay to pick up three people at Carnarvon. Arrived off Carnarvon at dusk had to anchor 3 miles off due to our draft of 6 metres. Launched the rescue boat and loaded it with one Greek and 14 suitcases recovered from the Kirki cabins. I took the rescue boat in, claiming local knowledge. On reaching Teggs Channel it was dark, new beacons were in evidence plus there was a dredge working in the channel itself. After one or two interesting moments when the motors cut out due to weed in the intakes we arrived at the fishing boat jetty where two Customs men were waiting to check the bags. By this time someone had chartered a cray boat to take our three oncoming passengers out to the Pacific Chieftain so I left the Greek mate and the Customs on the wharf and followed the cray boat back out up

Teggs Channel to sea where the rescue boat was lifted back on the Chieftain's deck. Up anchor at 2300 hrs and with 5 passengers and a full deck we headed due west to meet the Kirki and the Lady Elizabeth at 1200 hrs tomorrow, 100 miles off the coast.

Wednesday 31/7/91

0800 hours still heading west rolling in a beam sea and swell of around 5 metres but wind only 10 to 15 knots from the southwest. Kirki in sight by 1200 hrs well down by the bow with green seas rolling up her forward deck almost as far as the discharge manifold. A long trail of yellowish waxy oil is trailing away behind. Only a thin film as far as we can see. Thank God this oil is only a very light crude and not the heavy fuel oil we usually get from the Middle East. Had to go along side the Kirki's port side; tricky as she was still under tow at three knots by the Lady Elizabeth, also the tanker was yawing and rolling in the four to five metre swells. We pushed up alongside and transferred our passengers first. Each of them wearing a life jacket and jumping across to the Kirki's deck one at a time judging the moment carefully when the two vessels were almost level. Just seeing the difficulty of getting from deck to deck reminds us what a mighty job the Lady Kathleen did getting her three crew members up to the Kirki when they first arrived on the scene with no one to assist them when the tanker was first abandoned.

Then we snatch lifted the salvage equipment off the Chieftain's deck by using the Kirki's old fashioned derrick amidships. Some smart work by David Hancocks and his deck crew soon had the cargo on its way. But connecting up the hook to the lifts on Pacific Chieftain's deck was dangerous for the crew in the heavy swell. Also every item had to be tugged down the Chieftain's deck to get it in reach of the derrick's hook. However the most important items were off by dusk with no injuries or damage. The Chieftain pulled away to stay on close safety standby during the night and prepare towing gear for the next phase of the operation at dawn the next day.

BOOK REVIEW

Author Max Shean of Claremont has submitted this overview of his recent publication. This book will be of special appeal to those members with an interest in Australian Naval history.-

"Corvette and Submarine"

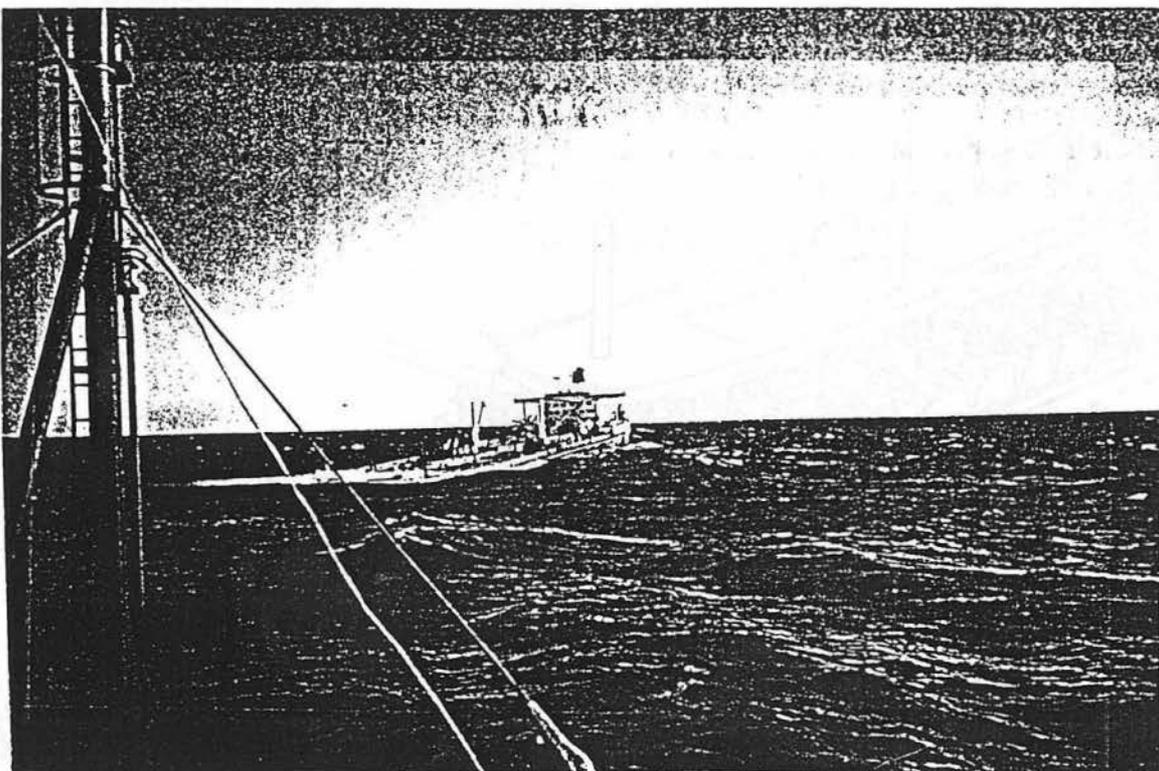
by Max Shean.

This is part autobiography and part naval history, being a first hand account of the author's experience in the Battle of the Atlantic and the 12th and 14th Flotillas of 30 ton submarines in WWII.

Many of the graduates of *HMAS Rushcutter*, the RAN anti submarine warfare school were seconded to the Royal Navy and served in corvettes on Atlantic convoys. This account is typical of the early, desperate years when the outcome was in the balance and describes the depressing seeming lack of success of the escort ships. Shean was appointed to the submarine service in September 1942, just prior to the turning point in the Atlantic battle in the following May. His ship *HMS Bluebell* was one of the first built and fought hard throughout the war, only to be torpedoed and sunk three months before the German surrender.

Possibly more exciting for most readers is his record of the small submarine or X-craft flotillas, developed to deal with the mighty battleship *Tirpitz* in her own harbour. There is more of the human interest side of operations here than you will find in official histories and you will meet a number of Australians, 50% of whom survived the war and are still at large. His final operation was an unusual mission for a submarine; that of disrupting Japanese secure communication by under sea cables, to allow the USA to intercept all traffic then sent by radio in order to complete their intelligence gathering. All this is told in simple, authentic style.

This book is available for \$20 by mail order from the author at Unit 2, 6 Bindaring Pde, CLAREMONT WA 6010 or from the WA Maritime Museum Shop.



The tanker *KIRKI* wallows in 5 metre swells 100 miles west of Shark Bay - 31/7/91. Photo - Pat Davies.

Seagoing Camels

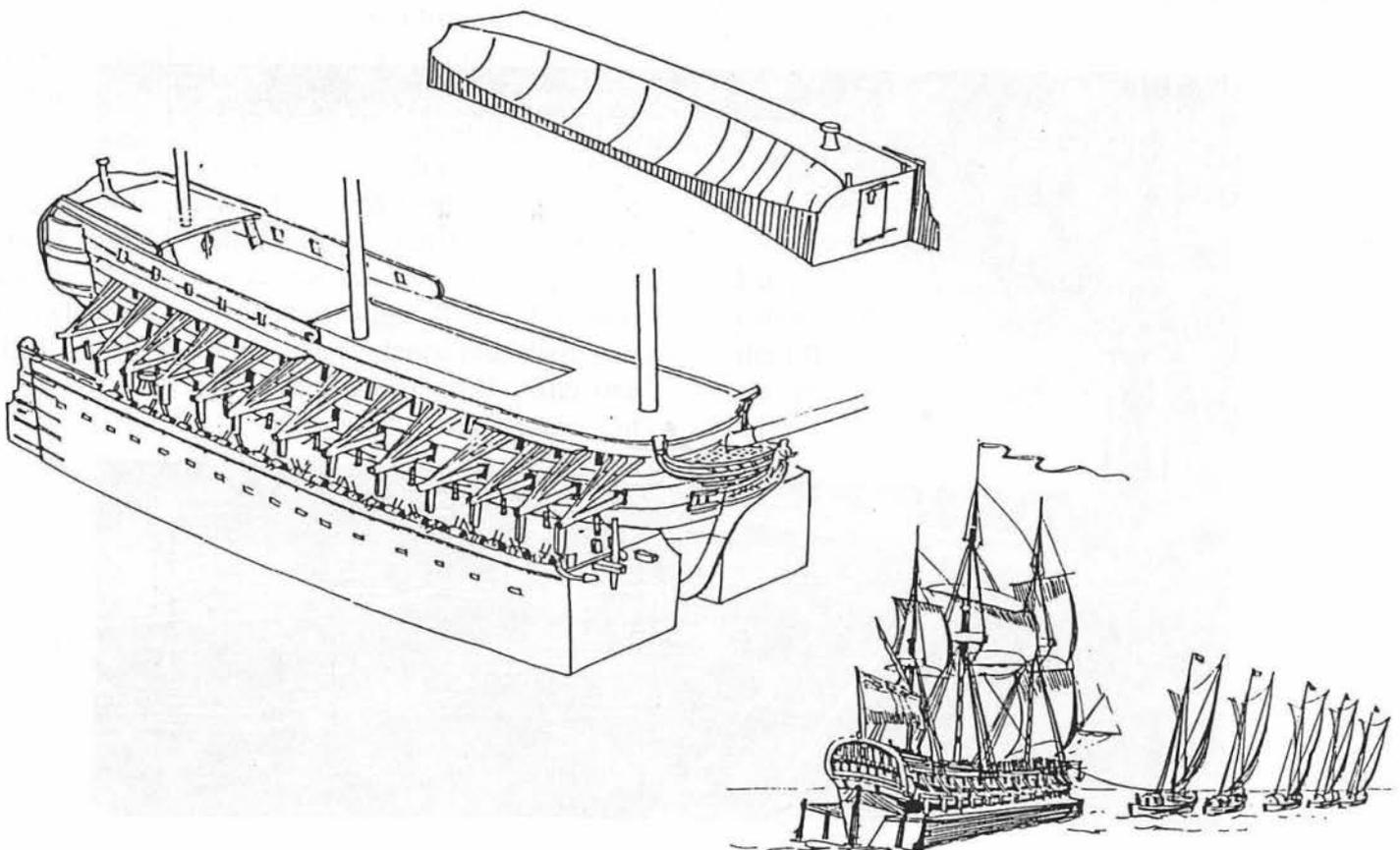
Unlike the 'ships of the desert' of the four-legged variety, the term Camel was also given to a device - a split floating dock - invented by a Dutchman called Bakker, as far back as 1691. Holland had, and still has, the problem of a great deal of shallow water along its shore. If you wanted to move a large East Indiaman like the *Zeewijk*, fully laden, over the many shoals along the coast, to the open sea, a camel was just the answer.

A camel consisted of two large floats, each hollowed-out along its inner length, approximating the contours of each side of the hull of a ship. Semi-submerged by partial flooding, these would be placed against either side of the ship. They would then be joined by chains passing under the ship's keel, and the chains tightened by windlasses. The ship was then braced very strongly each side to prevent any movement, and pumps then manned to remove all the water from inside the two floats.

By this means, the draft of the vessel could be reduced to as little as 2m, and so pass safely over the shoals. The camels, cradling the ship, would then be towed to the open sea. Once in deep water, the camels would again be flooded, the bracing removed, the chains loosened, and the vessel could sail on her way.

Because Dutch East Indiamen of this period were built to fairly standard designs, the same camel could be used, with minor modifications, to lift different vessels. The Dutch were not the only nation to use camels; they were used by the early whalers in Nantucket and elsewhere in the world. Present-day floating docks, even the lift bags used by maritime archaeologists to lift artefacts from the sea floor, work on the same principle. (Peter Worsley)

Harland, J. & Meyers, M. *Seamanship In The Age Of Sail*. Conway Maritime Press, London. 1995.



POWER STEERING

Most of us would think of power steering as being a fairly recent invention; I know I did. Power steering in ships, however, dates back 130 years!

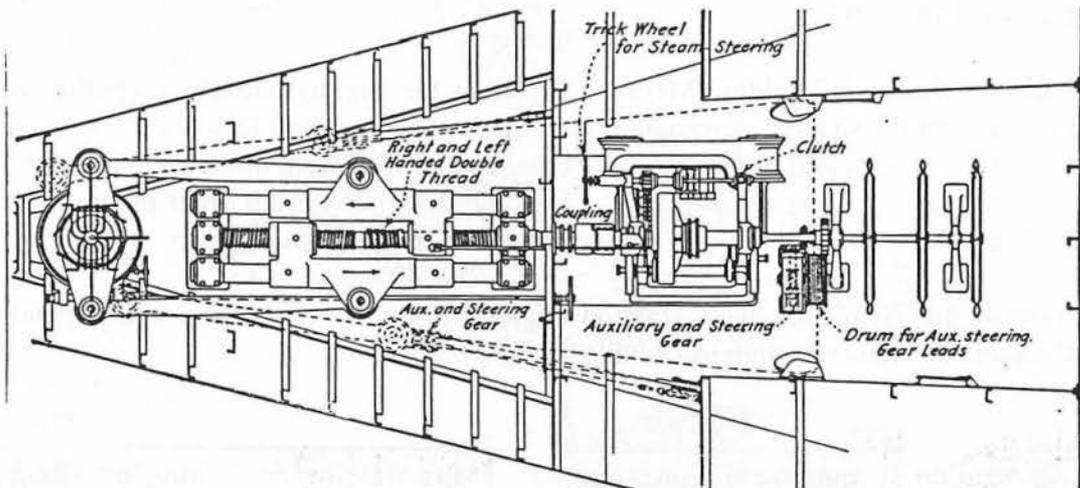
With the increase in size of ships came an increase in the difficulty of steering, especially in heavy weather. For instance "HMS Warrior required as many as twelve men to handle her steering in anything other than light seas."

In 1859 an American named Frederick Elsworth Sickells obtained a patent for a steam powered steering gear which subsequently proved to be unsuccessful. By 1867 a practical solution had been found. John MacFarlane Gray invented a device for the *Great Eastern* which used the power of steam to transfer the movements of the ship's wheel to the rudder. The drive could be disconnected to enable the steam to drive a windlass when required. This steering system was considered reliable enough to be fitted to *HMS Northumberland* and *HMS Monarch* very soon after.

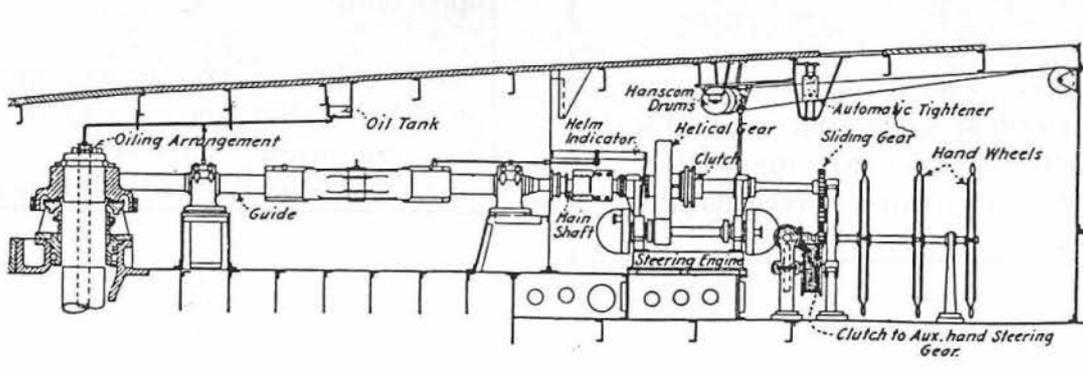
Many shipowners fitted auxiliary or donkey boilers to provide steam when the main boilers were not operating. This enabled ships to load and unload cargo using their own winches. After 1870 steam powered steering gear became standard equipment on large ships and even many small ones. (Peter Worsley)

Griffiths, D. *Steam At Sea*. Conway. Maritime Press, London. 1997.

Knight, A.M. *Modern Seamanship*. D. Van Nostrand, New York. 1918.



STEAM STEERING GEAR



STEAM STEERING GEAR

***Stanford* Propeller Raised**

From time to time organisations with similar aims to the MHA will be invited to submit articles on relevant topics. The Batavia Coast Maritime Heritage Association were recently involved in raising the propeller from the wreck of the *Stanford*. See MHA Journal of September 1996.

To compliment the recent annual Batavia Commemorative Weekend held in Geraldton, the Batavia Coast Maritime Heritage Association, led by Max Cramer, organised the raising of the propeller from the *Stanford*, wrecked on African Reef in 1936.

A crowd of onlookers at the new Geraldton Marina watched as the slightly battered propeller, weighing well over two tonnes, was lifted from the sea and deposited on dry land. Also on hand to witness the event and to add their comments were Mrs Fran Davies and her brother, Mr Peter Jeans, who were on board the *Stanford* at the time she was wrecked. In Peter Jeans' case as an embryo, yet to come into the world! Their parents were migrating from England to Australia and lost most of their possessions when the freighter went down.

The propeller is now on display outside the Geraldton Region Museum's Maritime Building pending its inclusion as an exhibit at the proposed new museum to be built in the near future.

All of the Association's incoming journals, newsletters, etc. Are now archived at *Porthole Prints*, South Terrace, Fremantle, and are available to members on loan

(If you have an unwanted collection of magazines of a maritime nature, then perhaps its time to let others enjoy reading it. Contact the Association; we may be interested in archiving the collection.)

The Maritime Heritage Association Journal is the official newsletter of the Maritime Heritage Association of Western Australia, Incorporated.

**Material for publishing or advertising should be directed, preferably typed or on disk, to:
The Editor, 294 Chapman Road, Geraldton,
Western Australia, 6530.**

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