

# MARITIME HERITAGE ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

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*A quarterly publication of the  
Maritime Heritage Association, Inc.*

**C/o: The Secretary (Ross Shardlow),  
23 State Street,,  
Victoria Park, W.A. 6100.**



**Editor: Peter Worsley. 12 Cleopatra Drive, Mandurah, W.A. 6210**

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**At**

**12 Cleopatra Drive  
MANDURAH**

**On**

**Sunday 28 March 2004 – 10.30 am**

**Come for morning tea and stay for lunch**

**For those spouses and friends who do not wish  
to be involved with the AGM, don't forget that  
Peter has just returned from Laos and Cambo-  
dia. Come and see what he brought home in  
his backpack.**





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

All of the Association's incoming journals, newsletters, etc. are now archived *with Ray Miller* who may be contacted on 9337 2614, and are available to members on loan. Please note that to access the videos, journals, library books, etc it is necessary to phone ahead on 9335 9477.

(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.)

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## EDITORIAL

Isn't it wonderful – I have hardly any room for an editorial in this journal. A big thankyou to all those who have contributed, especially Ross Shardlow (Secretary) whose excellent profile follows the excellent one contributed by Rod Dickson (President) in the last journal. The standard will plummet in the next issue which will feature yours truly.

Ross was very generous in supplying work for reproduction, I'm only sorry that you can't see the original photos of some of his beautiful paintings. The one below is of *Parramatta*. See other illustrations on page 6 and the article on page 7.

Jill and I look forward to seeing you in Mandurah at the AGM.







# Presidential Tidings

*Tidings: from the Old English Tidung meaning news and information. (Ed.)*

Firstly let me congratulate Nick Burningham on his marvellous book, MESSING ABOUT IN EARNEST. Once I began reading it I had to read pages every day. As a mad cyclist that rides 30 to 40 kilometres every day around the Canning and Swan Rivers it has opened my eyes to things I had never noticed before and more importantly keeps me aware of the changing moods of the river. The high and low tides and extensive sandflats and the migratory birds that fly in and out. Another very noticeable aspect of the river is the growing number of black swans and other water birds stately swimming and feeding at the cities doorstep.

An eyeopener of a read and a great addition to the bookshelf.

Another book that has recently hit the shops and is worthy of mention is Kate Lance's work REDBILL, the story of a pearling lugger built in 1904 and which lasted until April 2000 when she was wrecked in cyclone ROSITA at Broome.

## What Was It?

**In the last issue of the journal Rod Dickson posed a question regarding a strange craft in an old photograph. While not answering his query at least there has been some response which may help. The editor has received an e-mail from MHA member, Tony Duvollet in Darwin. From his name you may rightly assume that Tony has strong family connections with the Bretagne area of France.**

Tony has identified the right hand photograph as being of La Tour Solidor at Saint Sevan. This building is all that is left of a 14th century chateau which houses Le Musee International Du Long Cours Cap Hornier; the title

It seems that since I retired from a life at sea I have been working even harder than ever, certainly on the researching of maritime history. I am constantly amazed at the wealth of untapped resources that are available to the researcher and the items of interest that arise, for example, in an American whaling ships log book of 1841 there was this entry.

At daylight Captain took the deck and called for the boatsteerer who was also watch leader. The boatsteerer being ill was below. The Captain called him out and when he didn't come, the Captain as usual cussed and swore mightily and went into the forecastle and gave the boatsteerer five punches in the side to help him up and then gave him four or five punches to the head to make him feel better and ordered him to his duty.

Ah, the pleasures of a life at sea !

Rod Dickson

(en Anglais) means Museum to the Cape Horners, both the ships and the men. (Tony has actually visited this museum).

The middle photo is, Tony thinks, part of the 12th – 15th century city ramparts of the Breton port of St Malo.

The left hand photo which was the one that Rod's query was about is still open to speculation, but Tony's hypothesis is that Heath Robinson had a hand here! He feels that the photos are all of the same general area which is near medieval Mont-St-Michel, an island surrounded by vast tidal flats. The craft may therefore be a mobile viewing platform and the 'wake' could be the receding tide.



# The Ditty Bag

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

(The inspiration could take the form of contributions to this page!)



William Westall was one of the artists on Matthew Finders' circumnavigation of Australia from 1801 to 1803. He is perhaps best known for his drawing of Pabassoo, the Malay chief they met in the Northern Territory. While drying his paintings on the coral sand at Wreck Reef a group of midshipmen, including one who later became Sir John Franklin, governor of Tasmania and famous explorer, drove a flock of sheep over them.

The Royal Victoria Victualling Yard at Deptford was established in 1742. Among the many supplies of food, clothing, tobacco and a myriad other items stored there was rum. One rum vat alone was said to hold 32,000 gallons (144,000 litres) of spirit, and there were a number of rum warehouses. There were also slaughterhouses, pickling houses, biscuit, chocolate, mustard and pepper manufactories, brewhouses, sail-lofts, wheelwrights' shops, a coopers' shop and sawmills.

In 1881, the Metropolitan Asylum Board in London had established two hospital ships at Greenwich Reach for the isolation of smallpox patients. The ships were berthed at Long Reach in 1884, and later were replaced by a hospital, on the Kentish marshes. The Board acquired South Wharf in 1883 and provided accommodation for patients awaiting transference to Long Reach by its fleet of ambulance steamers. These had distinctive black funnels with brown bands and long deck saloons, with frosted glass windows. Between 1884 and 1929, when the London County Council took over the operation, some 140,000 patients, staff and visitors had been carried. With the decline of

smallpox and the greater use of motor ambulance services, the steamer operation declined and ceased in the early 1930s.

In 1898 a total of 943,500 cubic feet of timber was exported through Rockingham. In the period 1921 to 1930 lighters on the Swan River carried 55,000-88,000 tons of cargo per year between Perth and Fremantle.

Maud Landing was recently in the news because of a proposed tourist development. In 1897 a jetty 1,500 long, 12 feet wide and with a 100 feet long and 20 feet wide head was built at Maud Landing by J & J Wishart. It had a 2 feet gauge railway running out on it from a woolshed/store. There are a few remains of this jetty still visible.

According to the book *The Colony of Western Australia. A manual for Emigrants 1839*, written by Nathaniel Ogle and published in 1839, the floor of the Commissariat-store, laid in early 1835, was cut from mahogany "all of which was cut about two miles from Perth, out of the largest timber,..."

The first lighthouse keeper at the Bluff Point lighthouse in Geraldton (Geraldton's first lighthouse, 1876) was John Kelly. Born in Ireland in 1830, Kelly arrived in Western Australia in the *Lincelles* on 29 January 1862. He had served at Crimea and Sebastopol with the Welsh Fusiliers. He died in March 1908.

**Becueing.** A method of attaching a line to a small anchor or grapnel, so that in case the anchor should become fixed under some rock, a strong pull will break the



# The Shipwright's Adze

The editor's article on the adze (Sept 2003) continues to create informative discussion. This article from Jack Gardiner.

If I might be permitted to stick my neck out to expand Peter's article on the adze. The adze in the drawing would be unusable. The distance from the cutting edge to the end of the handle must be the same as to the front edge of the pin. (Some shipwrights make it to the middle of the pin). Every shipwright made his own helve and balanced it as above. I would have thought the bend in the handle was a bit excessive. We apprentices used to make them straight and steam bend them to sell to the ship chandler next door. He sold them either as adze helves or dinghy tillers.

We apprentices had to be able to cut to one side of a pencil line right and left handed before ever we were allowed to do it on a job. The foreman would put on a line half an inch away from the finish line and make us do it on that, then the man doing the job only had to trim off that half inch.

Some of the men had two or more adzes, one with a shorter helve or more hook on the blade or maybe an old one to use on the blocks in the mud.

The Mediterranean shipwrights use a little one handed adze called a "scipani" like a cooper's or wheelwright's adze but lighter. I have seen these in use in Bangkok, Singapore, Hong Kong and Zanzibar. The Yanks use a weird looking thing with curled up edges. This is so it does not leave corner marks on a flat surface. All in all a pretty useless sort of tool unless you can hold the job in one hand and cut with the other. The "scipani" I mean not the Yankee tool. They told me that the fishing schooners like *Bluenose* had adze finished planking, the reasoning was that the adze cut smoothed out the grain. They were all planked with soft pine so that might be right.

Going back to the ordinary adze the arc of the cutting edge was ground by each man to his own taste. The flatter the curve the flatter the cut but the easier to leave corner marks. If the curve was too pronounced it was difficult to get a flat surface. You got a series of scoop marks. It depended on what you were doing whether that mattered or not. It was an ancient custom that the adze chips belonged to the man who cut them, not the owner of the timber. They had a commercial value, at least the oak ones did, for smoking fish and I believe for tanning leather. We apprentices used to save them and sell them for threepence a bag to the ship chandler. The soft wood ones were only useful for firewood. If the wood heap at the boiler (for the steam chest) was big enough we could take them home. If a piece of timber had a lot of coats of paint so that it had a definite thickness it is possible to take the paint off without touching the wood (I have won bets doing it).

For trimming plank edges (talking about two inches or more) the plank was spiled and the positions of the bevel spots marked on it (The spiling board). Now the plank was laid out on three or more trestles about waist high and the spiled edge marked off. Then the other edge was marked off to the widths which were pricked off with a pair of big brass dividers into an even number of planks above the top edge. And both lines marked in with a stiff batten and a race knife (or pencil). Now it is ready for cutting. The trestles were placed one at each end and one or two in the middle to take out the bounce of the adze strokes. The top edge on one side was cut to the line and a bit out of square. The other was cut to the spiled line and to the right bevel in spots where the bevels were taken and the bottom edge left big. When both edges were cut to the line the plank was turned over and the places where the bevels were

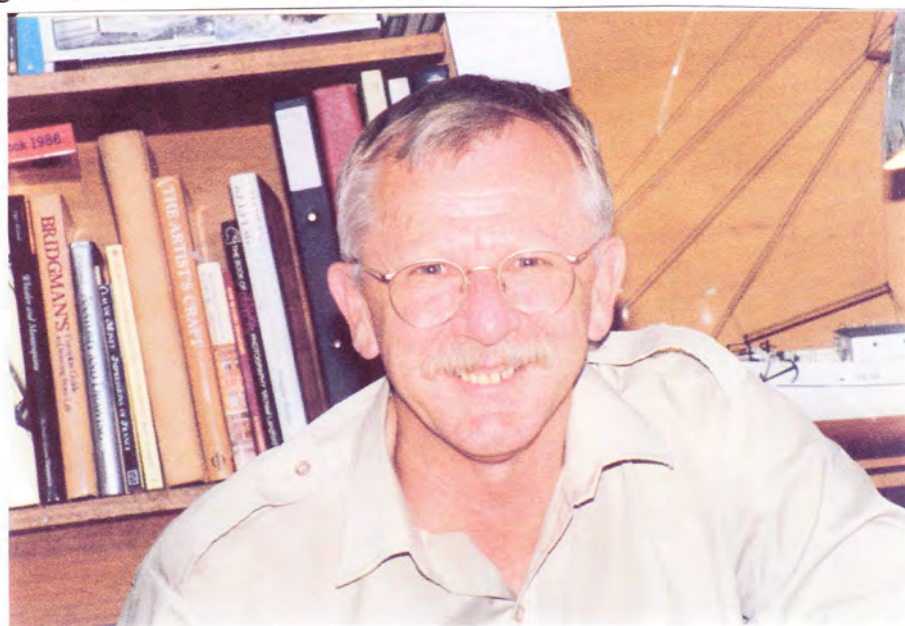


cut were joined up with the batten and a few places cut square on the other. When all this had been done according to the job the plank was dropped edge up to cleats on the side of the trestle to have the edges planed and the caulking seam cut, unless it had been allowed on the spiled cut. Fishing craft would very likely have the planks put on without the planed edge the top edge was left "fair and square".

found lead buckshot where people had been shooting rabbits but this did not damage the adze.

Nothing to do with the above – the sawyer used to supply the pub over the road with oak sawdust. It had a pleasant smell and was used as a carpet in the public bar and changed as needed.

When cutting flitches for grown frames the saw sometimes hit a rusted staple in the tree trunk where a fence wire had been and the trunk grown around it. We often



**Portrait of the Artist as a Relatively Young Man**



Ross has designed many stamps for Australia Post



## IF IT SELLS – IT'S ART

Following on with the series on MHA members profiles, Harry Dunbar discloses some revealing intelligence on the Secretary's day job.

Ross Shardlow is a marine artist. That is to say, he paints subjects pertaining to the sea. Ross specialises in traditionally rigged sailing ships - but a marine artist might just as easily, paint beachscapes, pirates, navigation instruments, lighthouses or starfish. So long as the subject has something to do with the sea, it is deemed to be marine art. The common thread that binds this singular art movement is salt! Lakes, rivers and dead marines do not qualify. The admission of salt lakes is less certain. I understand the likes of a Murray River steamer has been allowed but that is probably attributed to our rivers turning saline.

Though born in 1950 in Bentley, Western Australia, and shifting to Mt Pleasant a few years later, Ross's real initiation to saltwater took place at Point Peron where his family had a beach shack overlooking Bird Island. Here he had his own dinghy called *Scrounger*, and frequently went deep sea fishing in the *Platypus*, 'a twenty something foot clinker with one of those cantankerous two pot engines that rarely started unless you belted it with the crank handle. There were memorable times when we had to sail home under gaff rig.' Ross's association with Point Peron and the Rockingham district was not just from messing about in boats. He eventually became caretaker of the RSL Caravan Park at Point Peron and ultimately moved to a real house in Shoalwater. His works are represented at the local council (though he has more in the local pub) and he designed the City of Rockingham's Coat of Arms.

Ross confides, 'I must have been alright at drawing at primary school because I was allowed to skip lessons to draw things on the blackboard - I've often wondered about that.' His blackboard skills must have carried over to high school. With the help and guidance from his art

master, Norm Madigan, Ross left Applecross High School at sixteen to begin a career as a book illustrator with the Education Department's Publication Branch. 'It was brilliant training', he reflects, 'they were a great bunch of skilled artists and good mates. We had to be able to draw everything and anything and we had to be able to do it in good time. My art director, Ron Bocking, offered every encouragement and opportunity to develop my skills. Under his direction, I attended night classes at Claremont Tech to learn how to draw from life.' Night classes were not Ross's only part-time activities. With a keen interest in history, he started painting historic buildings, farmhouses and landscapes. Initially, these were sold through his father's barber shop in Perth and later in local council shows.

It was about this time, over thirty years ago, that Ross met three people that would forever change his life. The first was Vic Fall who lived nearby in Shoalwater. Vic had just finished writing a book that covered the maritime history of Rockingham, *The Sea and the Forest*, and was then writing another book, *Giants in the South*, which he invited Ross to illustrate. Vic had served his time on windjammers and had sailed round Cape Horn on the three masted ship *Monkbarns*. Ross already had an unaccountable interest in sailing ships since earliest childhood, 'but listening to Vic's stories and reading the various seafaring books he lent me, set me on a new course.'

The second person he met, following a local art show at Rockingham, was the indefatigable Poppy Meyers, director of the Colonial Art Centre. Ross had borrowed back some paintings that he had given to his sister, as he didn't have enough work to put into the Rockingham show. Unfortunately, for his sister, the paintings sold and she is still furious about it. His work





came to the attention of a wonderful lady and for reasons which are a complete mystery to me, and which she most certainly regrets at recurring intervals, she took me under her wing as one of her "special artists". Poppy has been promoting me and my work ever since.'

The third person met at this time was a consequence of Ross's quaint passion for muzzle loading firearms - and chocolate cake. It was through these associations that he met Barbara, a librarian with the Education Department. Luring him initially with the chocolate cake, Barbara cast her net by turning up at his gun club and coyly asked if she could have a shot. It had a consummate effect, 'any girl that can fire a bulls-eye, with her first shot, from twenty five yards, with a .36 Navy Colt revolver - is not to be argued with.' With this variation of the shotgun wedding, they were married not long after!

Working thirteen years in a government department as a book illustrator, when his real passion was to be a painter, was driving Ross into a state of nervous collapse. Taking a years leave without pay, Ross and Barbara went overseas travelling about Europe in a Volkswagon beetle called PUTNEY GREEN. Soon after their return they moved from Shoalwater to Victoria Park and Ross handed in his notice. 'Not a few people thought my action imprudent. My poor Dad never came to terms with the notion of quitting a secure government job and forever hoped I would come to my senses.' After five years of freelancing Ross thought it might be time to 'come to his senses' and tentatively made enquiries to see if he could get his old job back. He was mortified to discover that he was now unqualified! He enrolled at Perth Technical College to gain a diploma in graphic design but after his first year he was swamped by another project that would require him to give up all other interests - the persuasive Malcolm Hay asked him to paint an artist's impression of a proposed sail training ship. Working from scanty information, Ross painted the *Leeuwin off Cape Leeuwin*. He was then asked to paint six Australian

sail training ships, which included the *Leeuwin*, for a promotional calendar. When it came to painting the *Leeuwin*, he was again thwarted by the lack of plans from which to make an accurate drawing. 'I didn't much like the sail plan and there were no running rigging drawings to work from. Malcolm suggested I speak to the riggers, Barry and Robin Hicks, and it turned out they were as confused and frustrated as I was. I produced some new drawings for them to show what I would like to see and Barry exclaimed - that's more like it!' Barry showed the drawings to the project coordinator Mike McKenzie and while Ross was still postulating, they converted his studio into a draughting office and the first of hundreds of construction drawings for the masting and rigging of *Leeuwin* started to flow from his drawing board. 'Those days were madness - I'd wake up screaming. They were building the ship quicker than I could produce the drawings. It was the extraordinary people I was working with that kept the project going - Barry and Robin (Batman and Robin), Ray Miller, Len Randell and Mike ... we're all still great mates. If it weren't for Mike we would only have had Len's beautiful hull. Mike had the gift of smoothing the waters. The greatest treasure I have from those days is a three foot steel rule that Mike bought for me out of despair for the mangled excuse I was using. He engraved it *Ross Shardlow - Underwater Artist* - such is his humour.'

After the ship was launched Ross did not go back to his studies and never did get his diploma. Having accumulated a considerable self-taught knowledge of ships and how they work, he used the *Leeuwin* to launch into a new commitment. Henceforth, he would be a full-time marine artist. The *Leeuwin* had been built as a spectator vessel for the Americas Cup challenge. After the Cup she was refitted for her sail training role. Included in the Cup spectators was a representative from the Mystic Seaport Museum in Connecticut, USA. Ross's agent, Poppy Meyers, recognised an opportunity, 'she rugby tackled the poor fellow and wouldn't let him go until he promised to commission





me for some work.' Mystic Seaport is a prestigious maritime museum and accommodates one of the greatest contemporary marine art collections in the world. Poppy Meyers was indeed successful in gaining a commission for Ross, he ultimately painted four of the principal vessels in the museum's collection with prints being made from the artwork. The print of the *Charles W. Morgan* was used by Heidelberg Press to demonstrate their excellence at the Chicago Graphic Expo in 1987. The original artworks have been placed in Mystic Seaport's permanent collection. Ross and Barbara actually went to Mystic to collect the primary sketches and research material and were put up as artist in residence within the museum precinct until the work was completed. Barb's professional skills as a librarian made for a dynamic partnership. Following the commissioned work, Ross continued to exhibit at the Seaport Gallery.

'Unfortunately, some wag branded me as a "renowned international artist" and I've been trying to live down the *international* stigma ever since.'

The next major work to capture his passion was the *Endeavour* replica project. Initially commissioned to paint an artist's impression of *Endeavour*, he submitted two working sketches for approval, one of the ship at anchor, the other under full sail. Unable to choose one over the other, the project managers John Longley and Vern Reid elected to have both views painted. Again he had the daunting task of anticipating the exact detail of the ship *before* it was constructed. The Shardlows undertook their own "Cook's Tour" of Britain's museums and galleries to conduct their primary research before completing the final artwork for printmaking. As there were no original draughts of the stern, Ross was also asked to design the stern arrangement complete with gallery windows, carvings and lantern. 'I could detect two female figurines on the ship's quarters in an original Parkinson sketch,' related Ross, 'so I dressed Barb up in classical costume, complete with exposed breasts, and got her to model for me. It wasn't an easy pose, particularly as it was

out in the open. I made a mock up of the ship's side and Barb had to lean back and sideways as if she were nailed to the outside of the hull.' He was also asked to design the windlass carrick bits which the original draughts showed as having a bearded and capped seaman's face carved on them. 'For these I got my mate Paul to pose for me and I used him for one side and my own image (with beard) on the other. In this way I am now part of the fabric of the ship, and as the carrick bits face backwards, I can keep an eye on Barb hanging off the stern quarters. I get a real kick when some joker makes a pair of spectacles out of a coat hanger and fixes them to the carrick bitt.' When asked what was the best part of working on *Endeavour* he replied without hesitation, 'the privilege of working with Bill Leonard', the project's master shipwright.

Commissions for Ross's work continued to come in, usually quicker than the work was going out. In 1990, Australia Post commissioned him to paint vessels from the National Collection to commemorate the opening of the National Maritime Museum. The work included four stamps, souvenir envelopes and a print folio. In 1992, he was again commissioned by Australia Post to produce four Australian Warship commemorative stamps for which he won a gold medal in the National Print Awards. The following year he was commissioned by the American publishers ABC Clio to illustrate *Ship to Shore*, a collection of maritime words and phrases that are now in common use in the English language. Written by Peter Jeans, this book later won a Library of Congress literary award.

When Ross and Barbara were travelling overseas visiting numerous maritime museums, they became acutely aware that Fremantle's Victoria Quay was a significant, intact, heritage treasure-trove. When Victoria Quay came under threat of redevelopment, Ross took a side step from his usual work and began campaigning to preserve the maritime heritage of Fremantle's waterfront. He had in years past talked with Graeme Henderson about



forming a Maritime Heritage Association and Graeme now felt the time was right to implement such a group. Graeme and Sally May started the Maritime Heritage Association in 1990. As Vice President, and later President, Ross promoted the concept of a Heritage Precinct for Victoria Quay - not without considerable success. In 1995, the Fremantle Port Authority commissioned Ross to develop concept plans and drawings for the future development of the Victoria Quay Maritime Heritage Precinct. Ross considers 'they haven't implemented all my ideas. They haven't kept the railways, the working blacksmith shop or the A-Shed Café and Art Gallery - and some of the new buildings aren't compatible with the old ones. But saving E-Shed and establishing sites for traditional boatbuilding is something to be pleased about - let alone getting the precinct in the first place.' During this time Ross was also on the Board of Directors for the Maritime Museum. Years of pushing the Victoria Quay proposal at little or no pay took its toll. 'I found myself in deep water more often than not. I'd lost a lot of money - and, perhaps, a few friends. I had also stopped painting. I couldn't even afford to keep my studio and had to let it go. One day, the irrepressible Poppy rang me, and using different words to explain what Barbara had been telling me all along, gave me a right ol' bollicking. It was time to pull out of Victoria Quay, the Museum - everything.'

Taking a holiday to sort a few things out, the Shardlows were picnicking on the slopes of Mt Clarence at Albany when, unbeknown to them, the *Leeuwin* was working her way out through the Ataturk Entrance into King George Sound. 'While I was sitting there wondering what the hell I was going to do, the *Leeuwin* suddenly burst into view almost at my feet. It was a breathtaking sight. The wind was on her nose and she spent the best part of the afternoon tacking back and forth across the Sound making for the open sea. I looked at Barb and grinned - if that's not a sign, I'll go he!'

Converting the sleepout at the back of

their house into a studio, Ross resumed his role as artist, producing a series of 9x5 paintings on cigar box lids. The cigar boxes had been generously given to him by Roy McCarter, son of the respected boatbuilder, George McCarter. Coincidentally, it was at this time that Ross was invited to join the newly formed Australian Society of Marine Artists. At the inaugural invitation exhibition in Sydney, he won the President's Medal, the Society's first art award. The subject of the painting he submitted was *Leeuwin Beating out of King George Sound*. The presentation of the award was given at the Fremantle Maritime Museum. He is now State Vice President and last year was made a Fellow of the Society.

Since then there has been a steady output of work. His watercolour of *Batavia* was purchased by the Lelystad Museum in Holland to give to their acclaimed head shipwright, Willem Vos. His *Beagle off Breaksea Island* hangs in the office of Kerry Stokes while *HMS Success* hangs in the wardroom of *HMAS Success*. *Last Salvo* forms the cover of Wesley Olson's estimable book *Bitter Victory - the death of HMAS Sydney* and five Shardlows were on display at the opening of the new Maritime Museum on Victoria Quay. He researched and designed a replica 1850's pilot boat for the Rottneest Island Board. The boat itself was built at Tup Lahiff's venerated Wooden Boat Works on Victoria Quay. He and Barbara have sailed on *Leeuwin* as ship's artist and historian to gain first hand experience and research material for future paintings of *Beagle*, *Geographe* and *Investigator*. They have also walked and driven along the same coast, the last occasion ending dramatically when their four-wheel drive's engine blew up and stranded them off the Investigator Isles.

Ross continues to promote the maritime heritage of Western Australia through his illustrative quality watercolour and oil paintings. Forever seeking the ultimate studio, his Victoria Park rooms are a chaos of nautical books, models and memorabilia. Ross claims 'my studio is a tribute



# Thames Barges

The first part of an article by Jack Gardiner, shipwright, illustrated by some of Jack's drawings.

The four biggest barges ever built were the four *Alf*, *Will*, *Fred*, and *Ethel Everard*, named after the four children of the firm's founder, old F.T.Everard. The firm was quite large and had a fleet of motor ships as well as sailing barges, tugs and lighters all managed by Will Everard who was at least sixty years old when I knew him. Two of the wooden barges were kept for the annual barge race and had to race with their working canvas and so were real hard ships to work on as they were really over canvassed.

The bigger barges used to work around the coast, mainly east and south, and tried to avoid work in the river or the docks. I think the limit of 'home trade' was Bergen in the north and either Lisbon or Bordeaux in the south. There was very little trade so far away in my time but there had been during the first war when two or three barges really broke away and sailed to South America. One was named *Kindly Light* or something like that. They were rigged down and carried a half cargo and had to carry a navigating officer and two A.B.'s in addition to the skipper and mate. They all made it to Demerara safely and were re-rigged as spritty's. The voyage took thirty days Plymouth to Demerara where they

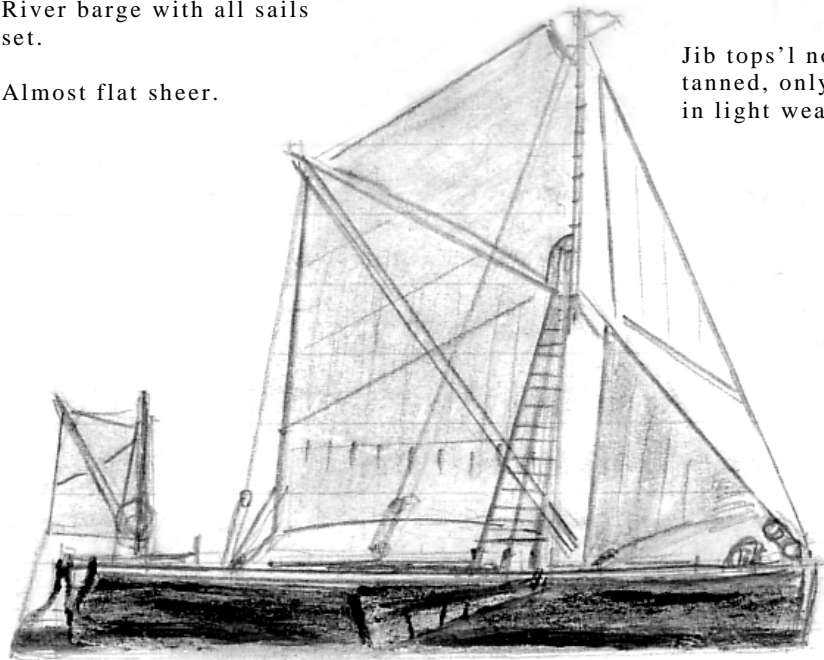
were used to freight sugar down the local rivers to the ports.

The smaller river barges only carried two as crew, skipper and mate, but many skippers were quite capable of working without a mate if necessary. A lot of them carried their wives as crew (a real mate).

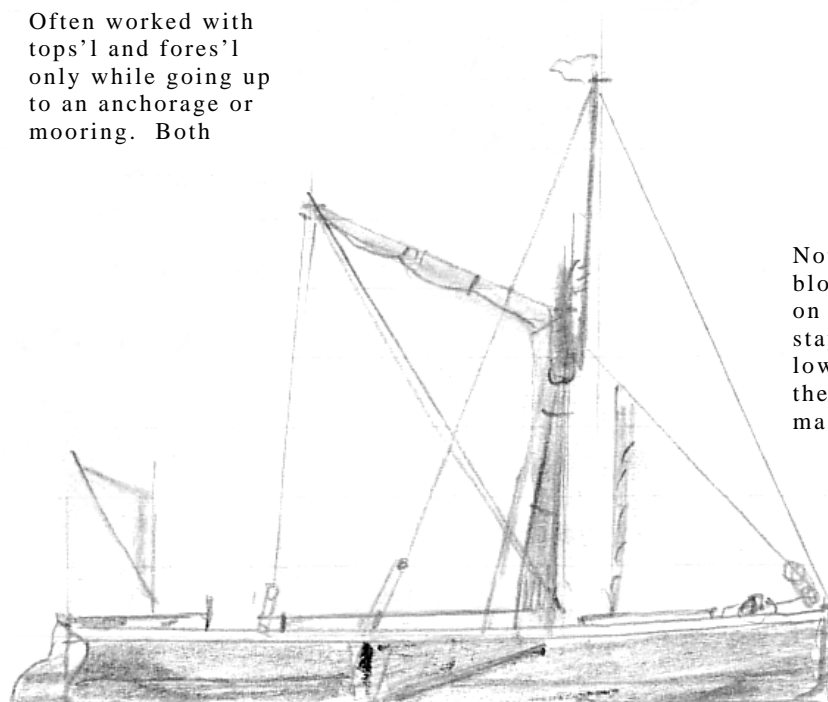
River barge with all sails set.

Almost flat sheer.

Jib tops'l not tanned, only set in light weather.



Often worked with tops'l and fores'l only while going up to an anchorage or mooring. Both



Note the blocks on fore-stay to lower the mast.

River barge with sails stowed.

Drawings by Jack





These barges were in size between 100 and 130 tons. Some smaller barges still kept going up to the second war, because they could get to places the bigger ones could not. They used to carry farm produce from Kent and Essex picking it up a surprisingly long way from the river up little creeks and streams. They only drew about three feet loaded and used to get up these creeks on spring tides. If they did not get loaded in time they got 'nipped' and had to wait for the next springs. They took supplies back to the farmers and the mate had to scull the dinghy ashore with a couple of bags of spuds, as a parcel of freight and leave a flag marker on the bank. It sounds like a chancy job to me, but there were still two or three little spritty's doing it right up to the war. This was apart from the trade in hay from the farms up to London.

### SPECIALIST BARGES

There were still a lot of horses used around the docks that needed the hay. After the horses had finished with it, it was carried back to the farms and called 'London mixture'. Those barges were specially built and rigged they had wide side decks and stronger hatches and carried a stack half way up the mast on the main hatch. The mate or skipper had to sit on the stack and tell the others where to go, they still managed to work to windward. The theory was the wind got round the lee of the stack and pushed the barge up to windward, even with the mainsail reefed to half its size to clear the stack. There were still a few stack barges working up to my time. There were a lot of other specialist barges too. Some firms had fleets of their own carrying their own products, cement, paper, bricks, beer, wheat, china clay, linseed, and even ammunition.

Woolwich arsenal had a couple which did nothing but carry shells for the navy – down to Sheerness and Chatham. They had lead patches over all the iron bolt heads, supposedly to prevent sparks. This must have dated back to when they

carried gunpowder.

The cement combine (an amalgam of a lot of cement works) had a large fleet which did nothing but take bagged or barrelled cement up to the London Docks for export. Eastwoods' brickworks had a large fleet all named after English Counties taking their bricks up to London from Sittingbourne in Kent. The difference in those two fleets was that the decks of the combine barges were all kept 100% water tight so as not to wet the cargo. Bricks did not matter, just as well because lowering the masts put a tremendous strain on the decks at the base of the mast. A barge could and did sail right up to a bridge and lower its mast with the sail still set and then put it up on the other side, usually taking on a hoffer to help with the windlass getting the gear up again. The windlass was a massive sort of machine which it had to be to pull a loaded barge up to her anchor against a strong wind, and to raise the mast where the pull was almost along the line of the mast to start with. There was a dolly winch above the main drum with 200-500 yards of light wire on it which was used to run out to a buoy or whatever and heave the barge along. It was not overly hard to do once you got her moving, and was used mainly in the docks where barges were not allowed to sail.

The river barges even carried a barge oar which could be used to move them in the docks. It was about 20 feet long and a rowlock was dropped into a hole in the gunnel, and the oar was used by walking backward on the main hatch. I even saw a barge moving once with a Seagull out board motor clamped to a leeboard and lowered till the prop was in the water. Some of the barges had their gear stripped and an engine installed in the cabin aft. They worked mainly up stream above bridges and the engines were only 20-30 horsepower, which was enough to drive them at 3-4 knots but as they always worked tides and so had a 3 knot current with them they averaged the



same speed as a sailorman. After the war there were still 100 or so barges still sailing and earning good freights too but as they came up for refits increasingly they were stripped and engined. The skippers were not all that thrilled about it. They reckoned it was boring having nothing to do but steer. None of the big coasters suffered like that, although the *Fred Everard* was converted into a real little motor ship with a deck cabin and wheelhouse and a larger engine and could (and did) go to sea. She and the others were built to take an engine with the stern frame with the shaft hole all ready. The *Will* had an engine later. I saw her in London last time there a few years ago and she still looked good with her sails still rigged. I don't know how she earned her living but doubt very much that she still carried cargo. My guess is she is fitted for charter work. She is 95 feet long and 25 feet beam and 10 foot deep so there is plenty of room in her hold.

I joined the *Will* in Southampton. I had just left a yacht and saw her topmast over the transit shed so walked through and got the job of 3<sup>rd</sup> hand. The crew was skipper, mate, 3<sup>rd</sup> hand and a boy for a cook and we sailed light for London next morning's tide.

The first time I took the wheel I was wringing it to and fro to keep a straight course and the mate said that I would not last a half hour, he showed me how to stop her from doing what she wanted with a couple of spokes. I tried it and it worked but I had to give another couple of spokes to stop her swinging back again. I learned a lot in the next couple of days as we had a light westerly all the way and had to tack all the way up London River. I remember we all ran out of cigarettes off the North Foreland and when it came onto rain I found a packet of French Caporals in my oilskin pocket. They still tasted horrible but better than nothing and shared between the three of us did not come to much anyway. We went back to the firms yard at Greenhithe (where the Cutty Sark was moored at the

time) and next day got orders to load cement at Grays's, nearly opposite Greenhithe. The cement works had their own jetty where they loaded foreign going ships and we laid at the shallow end. The cement in paper bags came down on railway flat tops with two pallets on each and were lifted out by a little steam crane, one pallet of 5 tons at a time into our holds. It was then carried by hand to the stowage on board. The crew had nothing to do with all this and the stevedores stacked the bags in neat layers. When the whole 275 tons was stowed the foreman threw a bundle of empty bags down before we put the hatches back on. The whole job only took about a day and a half and we sailed on the tide and finished putting the hatches back on, on the way down the river. When we left and got out to Spithead on the way back the weather was closing in and the skipper decided to carry on. By the time we got to the Nab light tower it was blowing a hard southwester. Too hard to comfortably turn back and by the time we were at Selsey it was blowing a gale and by this time we had shortened sail down to the jib alone. The wind was on the quarter and was tending to put us into the land and by this time the sea had built up. I know it was in the English Channel but it was rough enough to have two men on the wheel as we were sailing with the rudder set off, trying to hold her off as much as possible. Every time the bow went down the stern came up and the rudder came nearly out of the water. When it sliced down again we were going so fast it gave the wheel a tremendous kick up through the steering gear, and it took two men to hold it. Anyway we got past Dover and headed north and anchored in the lee of the land with all the chain out and a rope spring on it. The skipper said he had never before gone from Dungeness to Dover (I think it was about 15 miles) in just over the hour. Anyway we stayed at anchor off Deal for two days till the gale blew itself out.

I thought to myself if this is barging it is a bit rough, but stuck it out and it was



never so rough again while I was on her. We took another freight to Southampton then picked up a load of wheat at Rawks Flour Mills in Millwall Docks. Ships came in from Canada and Australia and unloaded there. It seemed queer to me to pick up a cargo to take it away again but the reason came out. The little flour mill at a place called Norwich on the Norfolk Broads (whole system of lakes and rivers) was built to mill locally grown wheat and when a lot of farms changed to growing sugar beet they did not get enough grain to carry on so had to import it. Norwich is (by memory) about 15-20 miles from the sea up through these lakes and rivers. It was wintertime so all these were full. Anyway we had an easterly wind so it was behind us and away we went and finished up in a little river too narrow to turn round, but we went hard aground in the berth and stayed there till unloaded. We floated easily then and the skipper hired a bloke with a little motor boat. She had a 10 horsepower petrol engine to tow us out stern first. We got to where we could turn round and the skipper arranged with the bloke to take us all the way down to Yarmouth. I don't know what it cost him but it must have taken the shine off that freight because it came out of his pocket not the owners. I forgot to say that, after we had unloaded the cement at Southampton the mate and I armed with a big soft broom and a shovel had to start at one end of the hold and sweep to the other filling up 4 or 5 bags (the ones the stevedore foreman had given us). Then sweep back the other way and filled 2 or 3 bags, then back again and again till the hold was clean. The price of a bag of cement in those days was 25 cents and we got 20 cents a bag for the sweepings but the Skipper took one third of what we got. It does not sound much these days but 25 cents was nearly an hour's pay for a tradesman.

I don't know a lot about freight rates but do know the rate was six shillings and eight pence per ton. Gray's to

Southampton with three days allowance for unloading after which the ship charged demurrage or waiting time. One odd cargo we got was 300 tons of palm nuts (whatever they were), which were crushed for oil for making soap. A ship come in with a parcel of them, I don't know how many tons, and anchored in the river opposite the factory and unloaded into a collection of barges and lighters over both sides, not to take them anywhere but simply to get them out of the ship. When she was gone we went in two at a time to unload at the factory (a parcel was one part of a mixed cargo).

Another freight was rolls of news print paper, which were surprisingly heavy. Then coal to a local factory and a load of castings, lampposts and drain covers, away from the same place up to London.

China Clay from Cornwall was a regular job for the coasters. Fortunately we did not get one. It is a white paste used, besides making porcelain, in high-grade paper and in toothpaste and probably other things too. It sticks to everything it touches and is nearly impossible to thoroughly clean the hold after.

Stone from Portland for buildings. Slate for roofing. Sand for all sorts of things, foundries, concrete, scrubbing floors, were all carried by sail.

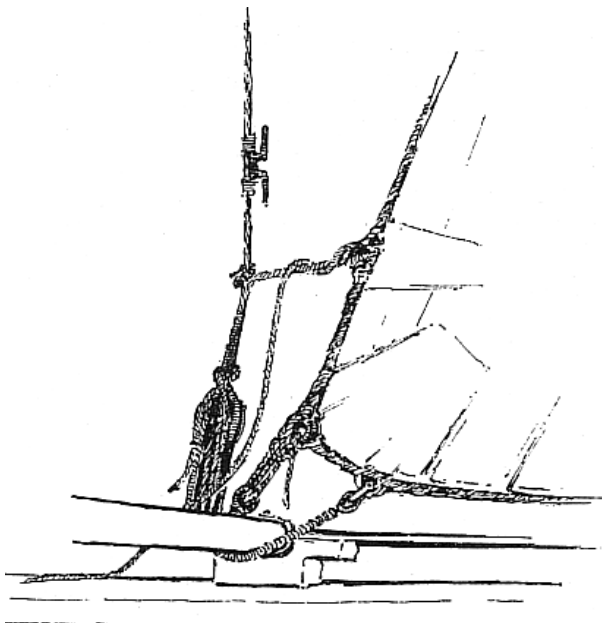
Eventually we were in Millwall Docks near the drydock and a 10,000-ton ship was in the dock. The cook and I went on board and got a job on her. It was very different to sailing. Regular hours and watches, the officer of the watch was SIR and the bosun was MR and no back answering. Two hours at a time on the wheel and two hours lookout was as boring as you could get and, after three trips to Canada, I left and went back to barging and working in the barge yard in Rochester. Then the war came and I was drafted into Chatham Dockyard and that is another story.

Maybe a description of a barge will





help. She had a very bluff bow and a transom stern with a heavy rudder hung on the transom. Starting from the fore end the bowsprit (only carried on coasters) was made to hinge up and stand like another mast, in order to get it out of the way for working in the docks. Next aft was the anchor windlass, a massive affair with a wooden, eight sided drum with the wood alternating in oak and pine faces, designed to reduce the wear of the three turns of the anchor chain. To let go the anchor the mate threw over a heap of the chain so there was only two turns on the



Forestaysail sheet and horse.

drum. He then chucked a couple of buckets of water over the two turns and on the order 'let go' gave the turns a kick to start them running. If more chain was needed just repeat the operation. To get the anchor up, the windlass handles were shipped and the crew started turning. As the chain came in it walked across the drum. When it reached the side, a claw on a short chain was hooked onto the chain cable in front of the drum, then the turns of chain were thrown back across the drum and the process repeated till the anchor was up. To save using the anchor as a fender coming alongside it was always dropped to hang under the forefoot. The coasters used to hoist the anchor tight to the hawse hole then drop a loop of chain round the flukes and haul it in high

as possible. This stopped it from swinging about. The wooden barges all had the bows doubled with sacrificial timber where the flukes rubbed.

Next thing aft was the rack on which the cable was stowed. This was against the fore hatch with the focsle hatch on the port side. The fore hatch itself was roughly square and just behind it was the fore sheet horse, usually of steel pipe, and just the right height to cop your shins if you walked into it in the dark.

Next aft was an area of deck that the bargemen called the mast case. The mast case itself was the big cast iron tabernacle. It was open at the back to let the mast lay back and the mast itself had a half round on the bottom so it could roll round in the shaped bottom of the tabernacle. Mounted on the front of it were two winches with wooden drums, one high geared and one low, used for warping or any use where an extra pull was needed. The main brail winch is on the port side and the coasters had a winch with three drums on the starboard. This had a very complicated brake on. It was simply a short end of help rope with three turns round the shaft. The three drums held the wire halliards for the tops'l, fores'l and jib. To lower any of these you shipped the handle and turned it enough to lift the pawl then pulled the end of the brake and tightened the turns on the shaft and jumped the handle off. The sail, which might weigh anything up to half a ton, was then lowered gently by just easing the rope brake. The big forestaysail was permanently sheeted to the horse and the sheet was not adjustable as to length.

Next aft came the main hatch with a sailing beam half way. The steel barges could lift theirs by unbolting the ends but the wooden ones it was built in with massive knees at each end. Behind the hatch came the main horse, sometimes of wood and sometimes steel. It was held in big wooden chocks at the ends and the wang falls were belayed onto cleats on them. On the river barges the next thing aft was the cabin coach roof with a sliding hatch



The Will Everard was about 90' long and 25' wide and 10' depth of side and loaded to one foot of freeboard.

This sketch is not to scale. It should be deeper from

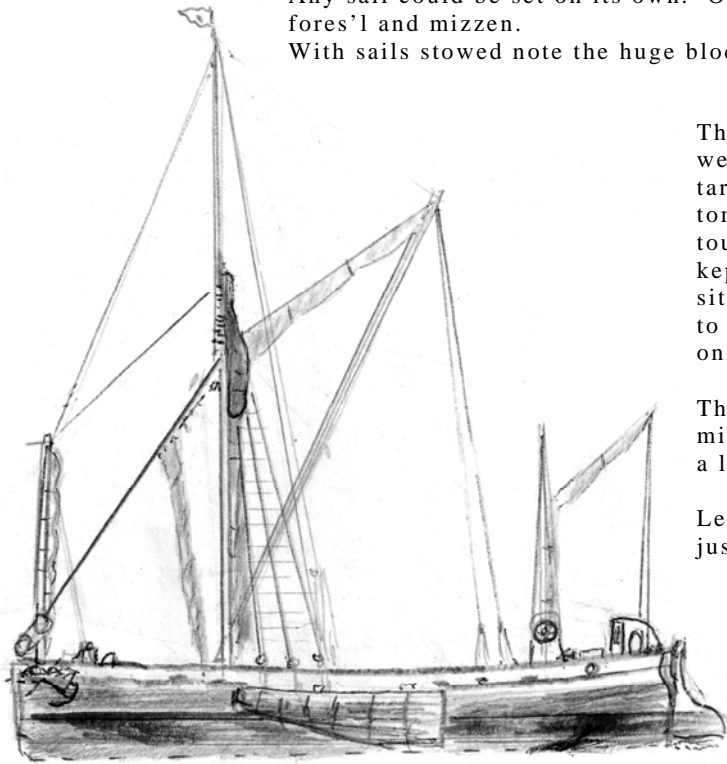
Any sail could be set on its own. Often tops'l, fores'l and mizzen.  
With sails stowed note the huge blocks on forestay

Fores'l tied in a bundle and pulled up the stay to clear the for'd hatch.  
The bowsprit raised with the jib halliards.

The fores'l is permanently sheeted to the fore horse.

Tops'l always stowed on port side of mast.

The rudder had a loose chain attached and the steering gear a brake so that when anchored the chain was made fast and the helm put over against it, this not only gave a permanent sheer but stopped



The wooden barges were always tarred. The bottoms were never touched and were kept clean by just sitting in the mud to load and unload on the tides.

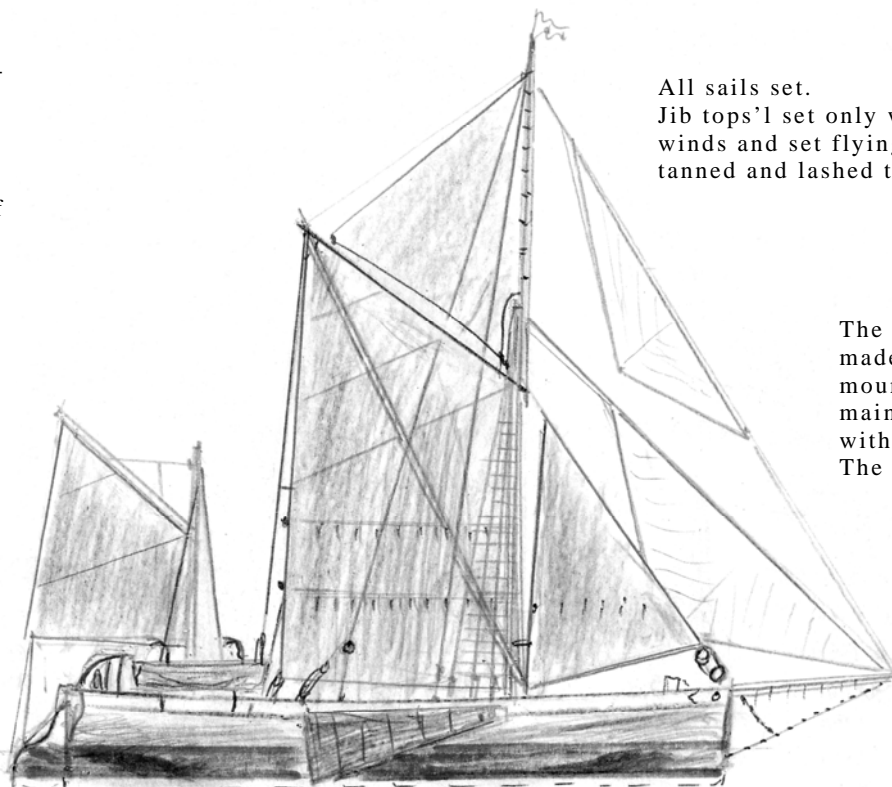
The circle on the mizzen shrouds is a lifebelt.

Leeboard winches just aft of main

A craft this size would be easily handled by 2 men at a time (that is allowing for sleep)

The craft is under perfect control with only the tops'l and fores'l set or even the tops'l alone. The reef points were only ever used to tie the foot of the sail up when a deck cargo was carried on the main hatch. Note provision for mainsheet. The mizzen had

All sails set.  
Jib tops'l set only with light winds and set flying. Jib not tanned and lashed to bowsprit



The wangs were made fast on the mountings of the main sheet horse with a 3-2 tackle. The running backstay

The bobstay had a chain on the middle as shown so that it could be pulled up when at anchor so that

90' x 25' x 10' depth in hold.



## Reaper

**Brian Lemon tells of building his 100<sup>th</sup> model, the Scottish fife presented by him to Bill Leonard in March 2003. This article first appeared in Model Shipwright for December 2003.**

At the end of last year, 2002, I finished my 99<sup>th</sup> model, the fishing trawler *Master Hand* at 1:24 scale.

A number of my friends started to ask, "What are you going to do for your 100<sup>th</sup> model - something special?" During the time I was building *Master Hand* I attended two demonstrations by a friend of mine, Mr Bill Leonard, on taking off the lines of small boats. Mr Leonard is the shipwright who was in charge of building the *Endeavour* Replica in Fremantle, Western Australia, and more recently, the replica of the *Duyfken*. As I mentioned, I had just finished *Master Hand* and it occurred to me that perhaps a model of something for Bill would be appropriate. Now Bill Leonard is a Scotsman and I suddenly remembered in a recent issue of Model Shipwright was a modeller's draft of the motorised fife *Reaper*. I already knew that as a small boy in Scotland he saw many of these old fishing boats, so the subject of my 100<sup>th</sup> model was solved, not so much the type of model but the idea of an appropriate model for a very skilled shipwright. The model was built to a scale of 1:30 from the plans provided in MS118.

I decided that this model was to be a complete surprise, so I had to make sure that a number of friends who were in contact with Bill Leonard more frequently than I had to be careful not to mention anything about this surprise gift.

### The model

The keel, stem and stern were cut from one piece of 6mm 12-ply wood, as were the frames. In line with my usual practice, I left about 23mm of surplus wood outside the final size for

holding in my Workmate. The stations were marked on the keel, and the frames (bulkheads) were fixed and glued at these positions, making sure that no twisting occurred during glueing. The next step was the positioning of a number of ¼in square stringers running from bow to stern and set into each of the frames (bulkheads). The next step was to sand this skeleton to make sure there were no bumps or hollows. Although the model was ready for plating (with 0.8mm ply), I built in a number of stringers as a frame for the deck, but was not going to plank this area until later when the hull was completely plated. Each side of the hull was covered in many pieces of this 0.8mm ply, up to the last stringer below the deck strake. The reason I do this is that it gives extra wood for glueing strength for the gunwale plating. I now glued a false deck of 0.8mm ply on to the deck supporting stringers.

Once this was completed I marked the positions of various hatches and other deck details that needed special framing. Before commencing the deck planking I built up the fish hatch area plus the wheelhouse and engine casing. Decking could now begin. The individual planks were secured to the deck with pins while glueing. These pins were placed in the positions where the treenails would eventually be inserted. Once the deck was complete I started to drill all the pinholes, using a 1mm drill bit. I made the treenails from a particular type of toothpick. I dipped the points of these toothpicks in glue and tapped them into the drilled holes. When I had done about a dozen I snipped off the toothpicks and trimmed off the small amount left with a scalpel blade. There are over 900 of





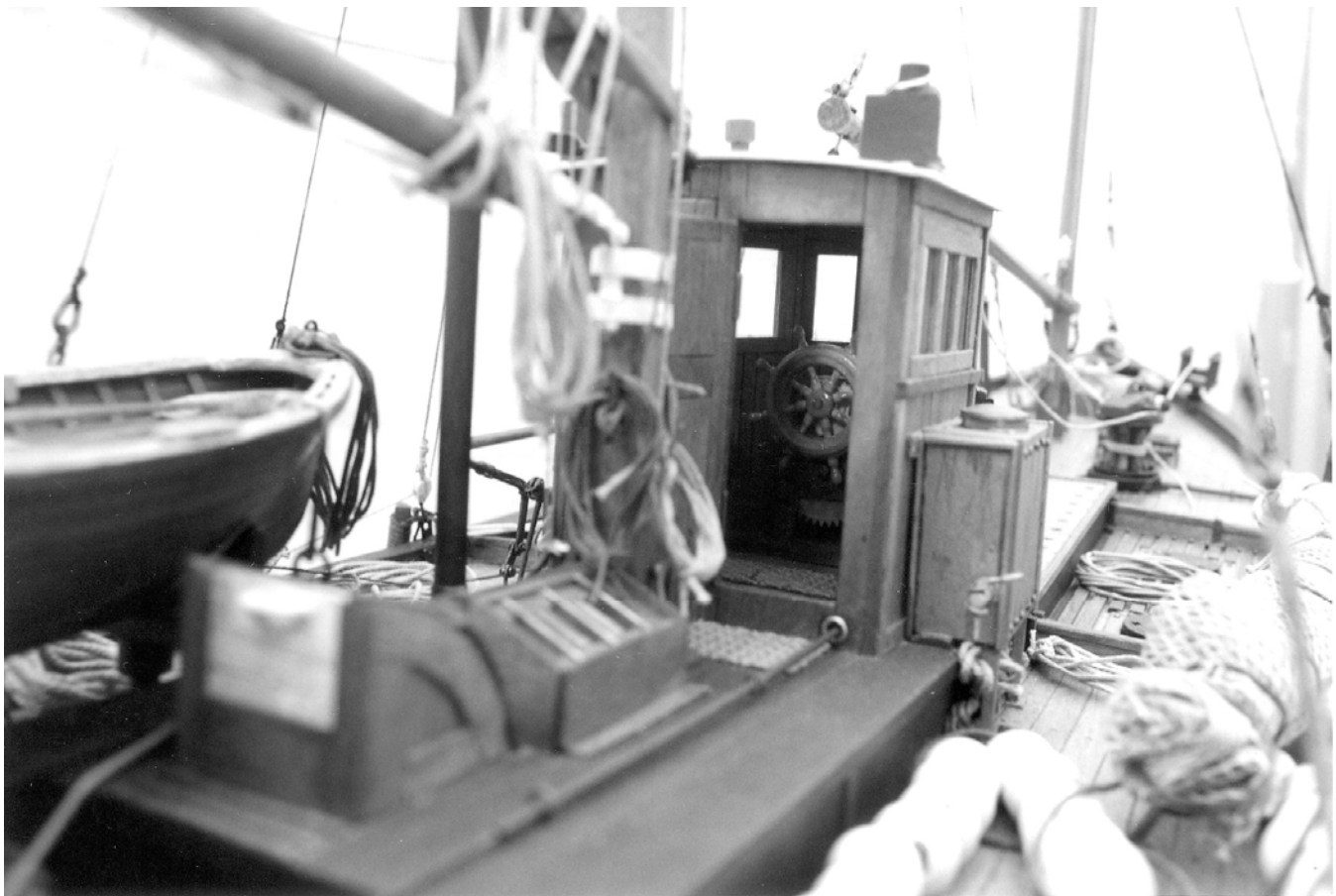
these treenails in *Reaper's* deck. Once all the deck was complete it was lightly sanded to make sure there were no 'bumps' in way of each treenail. The hull was now ready to have the final plating completed, including the very small gunwale area. The next step was to fit a capping rail.

The model was now ready for the deck detail, comprising the wheelhouse, skylights, fish hatch areas, and companionways to be fabricated. The masts and rudder were also made and fitted, although the masts were not

wide waterline was put on, using automotive pin striping tape. Finally, the hull was given two coats of flat clear varnish.

The propeller and shaft were fitted permanently, as was the rudder and operating chains. These were left hanging over the side of the stern until the deck, wheelhouse and other detail items were painted and stained.

The wheelhouse is fully detailed, although the wheel is a commercial item, fitted with the appropriate gears. One of



secured permanently at this stage. The next step was painting the hull. This was given four coats of white undercoat, rubbed down well between each coat. When satisfied, the hull was given two coats of 'anti-fouling' red (Humbrol matt 70), all over. Once it was fully dry (this took at least two days) it was masked at the waterline and painted flat black up to and including the gunwale. Three coats completely blocked out any of the red that was above the waterline. A fine 1/4in

the photographs is a view taken looking into the wheelhouse through the open doorway. The door is left permanently open. I used a torch to illuminate the interior, and it was quite awkward to get my camera close enough for this shot.

The hand-operated bilge pump is slightly unusual in that the support for the operating handle is not straight but cranked (see photograph). I made the pump from brass, and the handle and



plunger work.

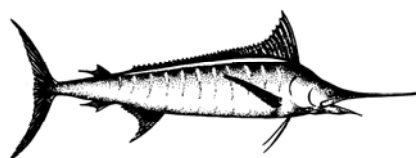
With all the deck details completed, the masts were permanently secured in place. The rigging, which had been made earlier, was fitted. The main shrouds supporting the masts were made from fine fishing trace wire.

The ship's boat, which is just 5in long, and of clinker construction, was made on the same principle as described in MS114 in my

article about the Shetland sixareen.

The model is mounted on a piece of American white ash.

On Sunday, 2 March 2003, the model was presented to Bill Leonard at a function at my friends' private maritime museum. It was a complete success and surprise.



*Continued from page 10*

to my mates - Rob's drawing desk and painting trolley; ship models from Brian, Murray and Rod, Ray's draughting curves, Syd's easel, books written by Ron, Rod and Nick - and a complete dinghy from Tup! I am surrounded by their spirit and I take my inspiration from them.' In pride of place is his father's barber's chair, 'from which great ideas emanate', and nearby the studio

cat stretched out on its own couch, reminds us that Ross always includes himself and the ship's cat in his paintings. Asked why he includes himself in his paintings he said, 'so I can truly say I have sailed with Cook, Flinders and FitzRoy - I was there.'



# QUIZ

## Answers to December 2003

1. The only VOC ship known to have struck the Western Australian coast on the return journey from Batavia to the Netherlands is the *Vianen*. Under the command of Gerrit Frederikszoon de Witt it left Batavia late in the season having loaded 5,000 copper ingots to correct the ship's trim. The vessel was ordered to sail through Bali Straits instead of Sunda Straits. However it actually sailed through Balamboan Strait. Driven south by contrary winds it hit the Australian coast at about 21° S near present day Port Hedland. The crew had to jettison 16-20 tonnes of pepper and some of the copper ingots to get the ship afloat. In a leaking condition and with the pumps manned continuously the ship limped to Mauritius where it was repaired.
2. Steamboat Islet and The Man In The Boat are both near Cape Preston. The Man In The Boat is a rock about 2 miles from Steamboat Islet and about 8 miles west of Cape Preston.
3. Gammoning is the lashing that held the bowsprit down to the stem in old sailing ships.

## Questions

1. The Rowley Shoals west of Broome are one of WA's premier dive sites. Who named them, why and when?
2. The Beaufort Scale of wind force allocates a number from 0 to 12 to describe certain wind conditions. What is the actual wind speed in knots for Force 8 (gale) and Force 10 (storm).
3. In wooden ship construction what are carlines?

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