AMATEUR BOAT BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION

JAN/FEB '01

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Contact any of these four people for clarification of association activities.

RIGGING, THE PROFESSIONAL APPROACH.

How to rig a yacht, sensibly, practically and economically? This was the question addressed by Don Kyle, general manager of Rolly Tasker's Sail Loft, at our November meeting. Don had been a bit diffident about making a speech and had said he'd rather answer questions almost exclusively but he started on the prompt list of ideas the committee had planned and presented him with earlier, and then there was no stopping him - we got the talk we'd all come to hear and it was excellent.

As we'd already specified a bias towards cruising boats, Don started with the problem of that definition. He pointed out that the term "cruising boat" covered an enormous range and extended right up to quite recent ex-racing boats. He said that many of these were very suitable for cruising and invariably demonstrated good windward ability which can be extremely useful, especially in coastal situations. Those of us who attended Kim Klaka's two talks on cruising aboard "Panache II" would concur.

On the subject of second hand gear Don was more scathing - most of it he described as "useless". In particular he warned about buying such items as winches which might now be discontinued lines with spare parts no longer available. Proper preventative maintenance, on the other hand, can make existing rigging last a very long time. The process, we were told, starts with regular washing of everything, followed by checking of wire for broken strands. Sheaves should be removed, cleaned and lubed annually, and on every possible occasion apply bearing chromate, such as "Durolac", as an insulator between dissimilar metals to avoid the the dreaded electrolysis.

Given this treatment, Don said, the life of

masts and wire could be expected to be very long. Insurers would like to see standing rigging replaced every six years but Don feels that ten is more reasonable, and he sells the stuff. Should the boat be over-rigged by as little as 1/16" (5/16" instead of 1/4", as in Jon Sanders' case) the rigging will last a heck of a lot longer - although David Dicks' rigging, rigged up from 1/4" to 3/8", returned from his circumnavigation with many broken strands (was this due to a lack of flexibility, perhaps?).

Taskers rig almost exclusively with 1X19 standing rigging and 7X19 flexible wire for halyards and these days the more corrosion-resistant 316 alloy is not significantly more expensive than 304. Solid rod rigging, however, is seen as the exclusive preserve of fanatic racers. Although it doesn't form hard spots near splices it can break elsewhere with no warning and is prohibitively expensive, especially when it comes to buying appropriate fittings. Don sees little point in using galvanised wire these days, even if it was once touted as the perfect material for cruisers. In respect to synthetic halyards Don pointed out that Spectra rope was hard to beat. Although it costs about 60% more than a wire/rope tail combination, Spectra will run over cheaper plastic sheaves which aren't prone to seize up as aluminium ones are.

When it comes to buying a mast it's hard to go past aluminium - it's lighter and cheaper than timber, despite the fact that mast sections cost about double the price of any other extrusions, due mainly to the enormous number of pieces which have to be rejected and returned to the the manufacturer. Carbon masts are becoming more popular but remain the prerogative of fanatic racers again due to cost. Every carbon mast is a custom arrangement with double thicknessing laid up to suit particular fittings and so on. So unless you've got a vintage boat that has to be kept original, and must have a wooden mast in consequence, aluminium is the only choice.

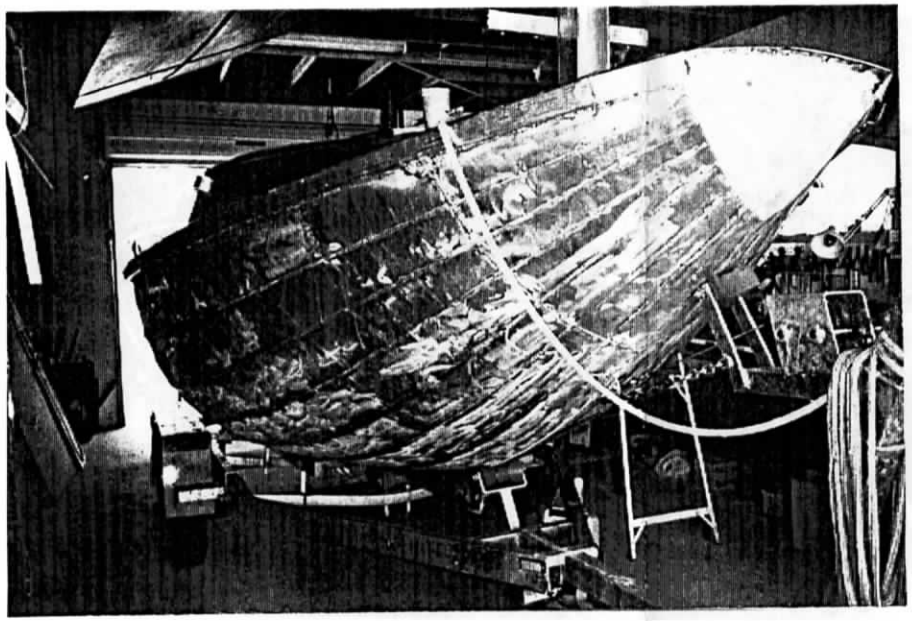
The audience showed quite a lot of interest in Norseman and Staylock bolt-together fittings as an alternative to roll-swaging but Don pointed out that the NZ equivalents of these were far more affordable with present exchange rates. And yes, traditional-type rope (synthetic, but looks the part) made by Donaghy is readily available for the traditional enthusiast.

Don had many other pearls of wisdom to share, too many for this newsletter. Suffice it to say that he had no trouble holding his audience's attention for a couple of hours - a long time. It was clearly the sort of discussion most boatbuilders needed and we were very lucky to be able to hear it.

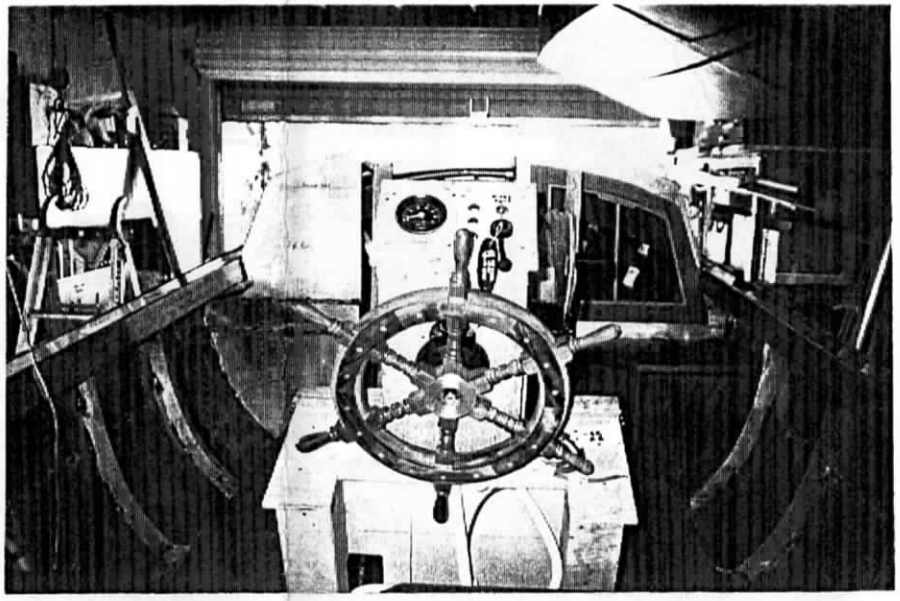
A LITTLE BIT OF THE NETHERLANDS

On Saturday, Dec 9 we were invited to view Martin Hartman's traditional Dutch "Vlet", (or is that vLet? it seems to be written both ways) in Rossmoyne. Martin has a lifelong association with the sea, principally as a naval architect first in his native Holland and then here working with Tenix Shipbuilding which he did until his retirement earlier this year.

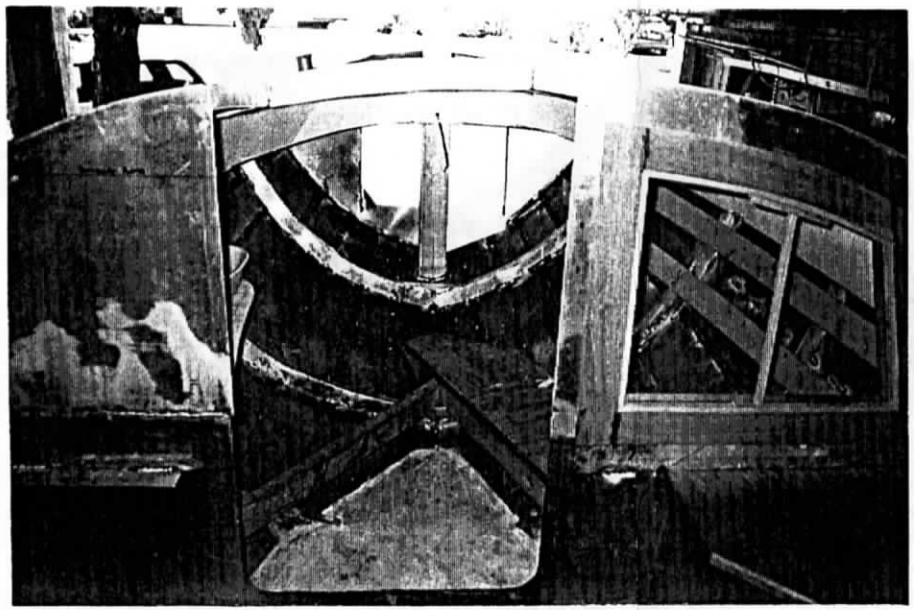
The Vlet is usually built around 7.5 metres long although Martin's is a metre shorter than this with a beam of 2.4m and a displacement of about 1100kg. These days in the northern parts of Holland it is built in teak as an open recreational boat powered by an engine. The planks all pull up in an easy curve to meet a small bow transom; there is no hint of a stem



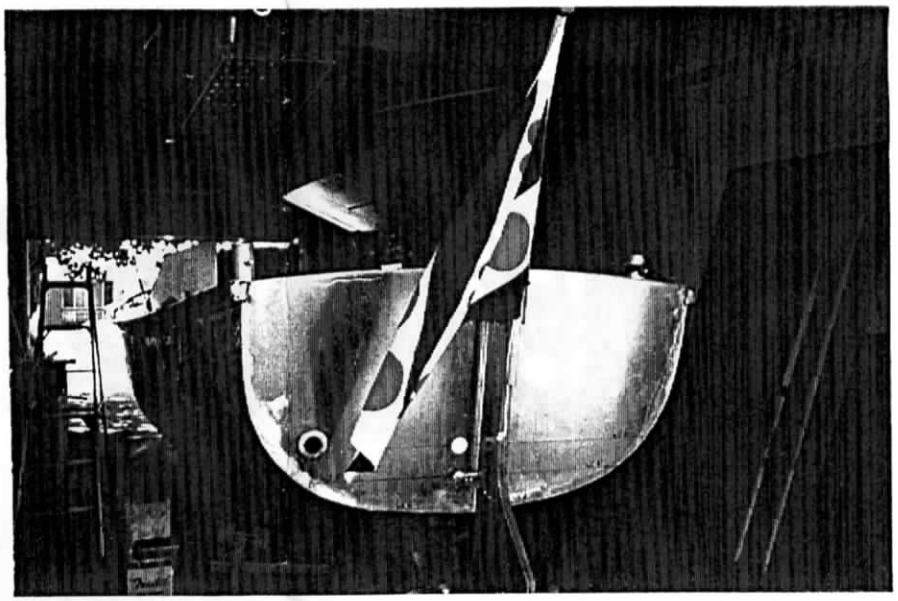
The hull on trailer, showing the small bow transom.



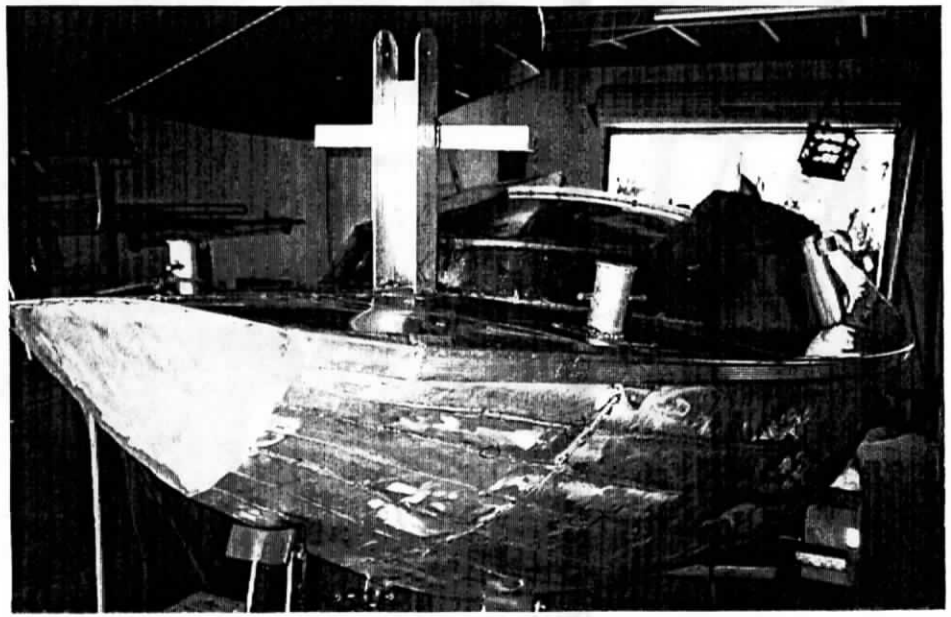
The helm position, folds clear for engine access.



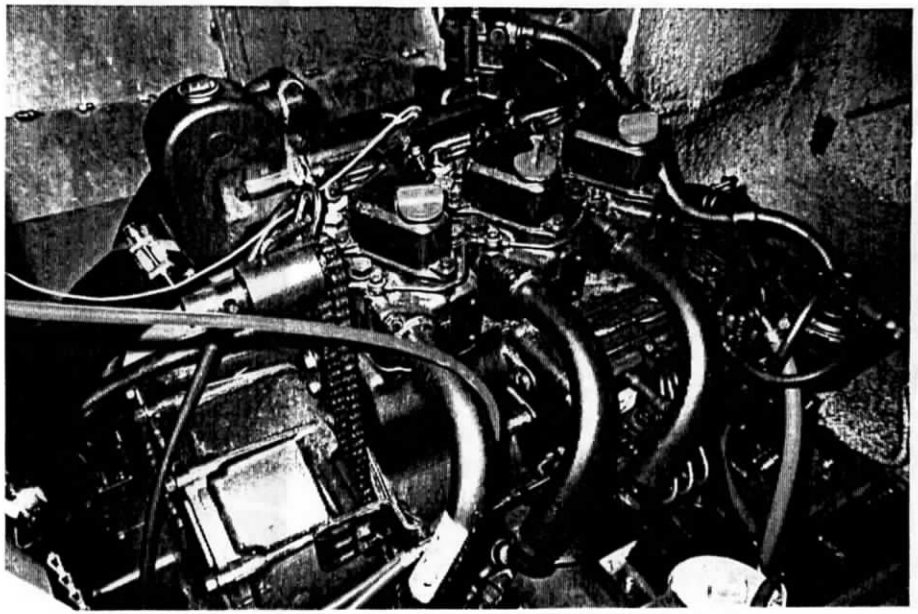
Looking forward into the cuddy in the bow.
Note window to starboard.



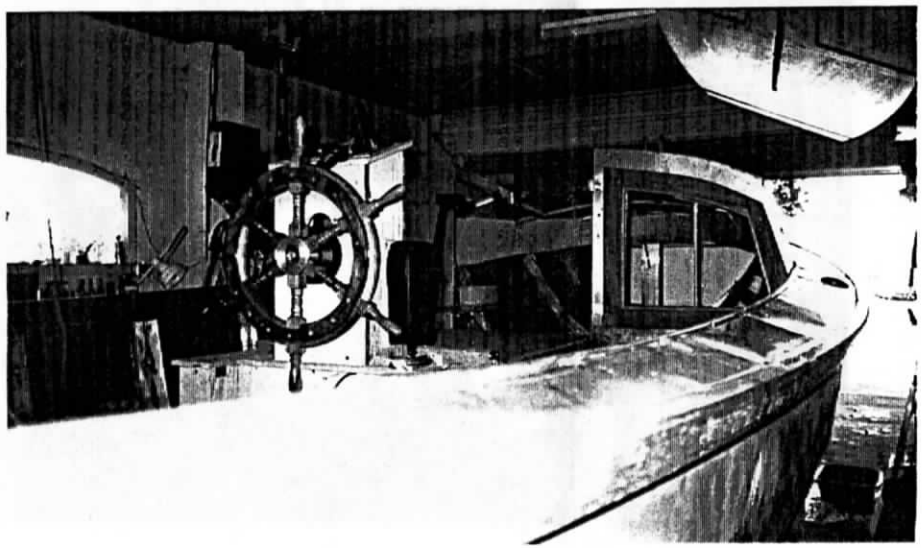
The flag of Martin's native Friesland adorns the stern.



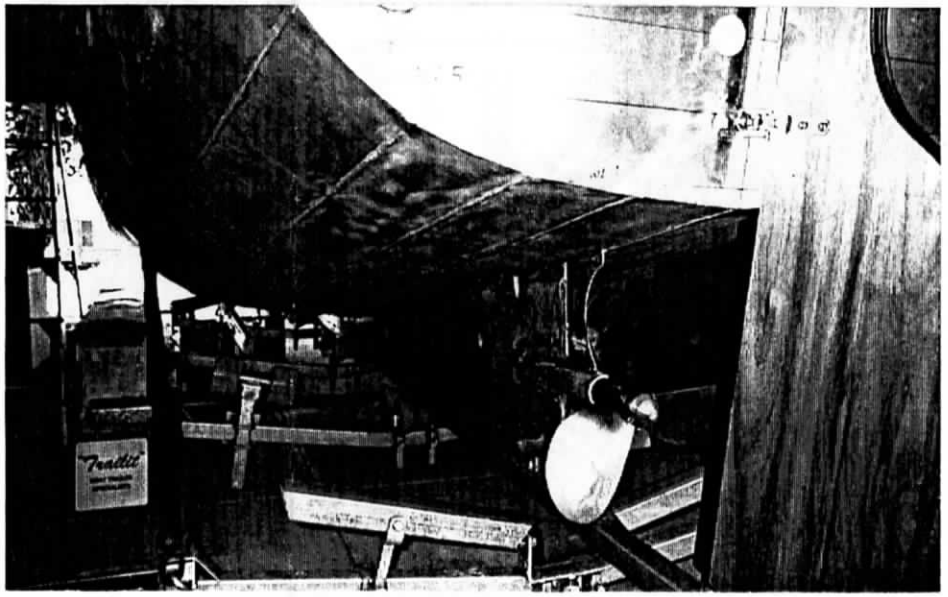
Another bow view, showing the robust mast tabernacle.



3 cylinder Yamaha 30hp provides more than enough oomph.



View along the starboard side deck, past helm to the cuddy.



The propulsion department. Prop approx 17" x 17"

post or conventional bow at all. Upside down I should think the bow would be reminiscent of an Irish Curragh more than any thing. There is a large conventional transom at the stern and maximum beam is carried well forward, about a third of the length from the bow.

In this case Martin has chosen to build in aluminium, 4mm for the hull planks and 2.5mm for the (minimal) decks. He first drew the plan up by traditional methods, starting about August 1999 and then completed fairing the lines on his work computer. Unfortunately, although the computer would give him accurate outlines for all the planks, it wouldn't include the overlap areas which are part and parcel of clinker building so he eventually built it as carvel with his son MIG welding all the seams of seven strakes a side. The strakes were all plasma cut at work but after that the project reverted to a traditional amateur home-built exercise. Perhaps in respect for the more open water which this Vlet will face in WA, Martin has decked the forward third with a small cuddy cabin but the boat is still steered from a free-standing helm position aft of the 30hp Yamaha engine.

Although the boat requires quite a few finishing touches it is already operational and has been out several times. Hull speed is reached at about 1800 rpm, although the engine will run to 3000, so there's plenty of power in reserve. At hull speed or faster the boat throws a healthy bow wave, a lot of which is thrown back over the crew especially in a fresh cross-wind. Martin can see only two cures at this stage - either slow down or start fitting canvas spray dodgers to increase the protection that starts with the forward decking.

There is already a large tabernacle well forward, waiting to receive a mast on which will hang a fairly large cat-rigged gaff mainsail. With no centreboard there were some misgivings among the visitors as to whether the boat would have a balanced helm to windward. There's a small forward skeg, just as in the originals, but it doesn't seem to have enough area to provide the balance. Perhaps the originals use leeboards. The modern building material has resulted in an embarrassing degree of weight saving, so much so that Martin has poured concrete into the forward bilges to bring the boat up to weight and down to her marks. However this has meant that a wet bait box now can't be accommodated forward of the engine as originally intended.

Early launchings indicated that the welding wasn't perfect - there were some small leaks, now all fixed up. The biggest challenge in this respect was with the (hollow) skeg which had pin holes in the welding. Eventually a tire valve was fitted, allowing pressure testing to locate all the holes (there's more than one way to skin a cat) and these were then plastered up with epoxy. The valve's still in place.

All in all, the visit was a fascinating glimpse at traditional ideas from a little-known (to us) part of the world, mixed with a dash of modernity. Would that there were a few more independent souls prepared to follow their dream, rather than Mr Bertram's! Thanks very much, Martin, for an eye-opening visit. We look forward to seeing the completed vessel.

ADMINISTRATIVE

JANUARY EVENING MEETING
Tuesday 30th.

This will be our second Show and Tell evening (following Dec '99) and should be at least as enjoyable as the first. Two speakers already lined up are Rolf Heidecker, a work colleague of Geoff's, and Peter Leggatt. Rolf has built a 11.3m bulb-keel yacht, strip planked in Duracore with a glass skin, a technique we've not had an explanation of before, so that should be very interesting, while Peter has a family history of Swan River yachting going back generations, so we should get insights into the very old and the quite new. Remember, if you have a project worth five to ten minutes of explanation, preferably with a couple of illustrations, this will be THE night. Illustrations can be any form, whether prints (we can project them), slides, video, you name it. And if you've nothing to say, then come along and listen, it will all be worth hearing.

TOOLBOX VISIT
Saturday, Feb 10th, 12.00 noon, sharp.

This visit will be to observe the projects at OCEANFAST'S works at Egmont Rd, Henderson. Geoff and John are both part of the design team there and can get us in but only at the time shown above, so don't be late! The reason is that that is when security finishes up. The visit will only take about an hour and a half so it will be a middle of the day thing rather than the more usual all-afternoon show. SOLID SHOES MUST BE WORN. As I understand it, Oceanfast is now the luxury monohull subsidiary of Austal ships, building motor yachts and so on. I'm afraid I don't know the exact situation following their disastrous fire last year but I should imagine they're well and truly over that now.

Approach the site from Russell and Sparks Rds. Coming from the Freeway and Rockingham Rd, Sparks is the last turn left off Russell before striking Cockburn Rd. Egmont is the first right off Sparks and the site is number 15. See you there.

CALENDAR:

Tues, 30th Jan.
Show and Tell Evening.
Mounts Bay Sailing Club.
Upstairs, Perth end.
7.30 for 8pm.

Saturday, 10th Feb.
Toolbox Visit.
Oceanfast, 15 Egmont Rd, Henderson.
Solid footwear a must.
12 noon, sharp.

Monday, 19th Feb.
Committee meeting, 7.45pm.