

AMATEUR BOAT BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION

SEPT/OCT '00

ABBA COMMITTEE

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MARVELS IN MINIATURE

Perhaps it was the cold weather, but not a lot of members turned up to hear master-model builder extraordinaire, Brian Lemon, give us an insight into how he builds such exquisite model boats and ships on the 25th of July. That said, those of us who attended were treated to something definitely different as Brian went over the details behind about a dozen widely diverse models of immaculate construction, ranging from little dinghies such as an Acorn 12 of about 150mm long up to the "Krait" and the Clyde Puffer, "Skylight", each over a metre.

Over a twenty year period Brian has built 73 models, given many away, of course, and this night brought nine along, supported by no less than the three he has built for member, Mike Igglesden. All are scratch-built, no kits here, and even small parts such as rigging blocks and wheels are usually made the hard

way because he can seldom get parts in the right scale and anyway, the shop market has changed over the years so that it caters almost exclusively for kit builders these days; individual parts are like hens' teeth. Talking about scale; Brian confesses that in the case of "Skylight" he chose the scale to suit some available plastic figures which he made up into crew members, a detail which emphasises how small these Clyde Puffers were.

And Brian builds his wonderful works of precision art on the - wait for it - kitchen table! His only power tool is a cordless drill, which occasionally serves as a basic lathe to turn winch drums and the like, but everything else is carved or shaped by hand. The hull invariably starts as a set of frames on an over-depth keel. Clinker hulls are then skinned as if they were a full-sized vessel, while carvel hulls are "plated" with small areas of thin ply

glued between frames and the resulting conical forms are faired in with plastic wood filler. Sounds rough, but it works, and well.

Standardisation ends there because fittings and finishes are as diverse as the prototypes. Perhaps research is the next big job, at least in many instances. The "Krait", for instance, was to represent only a six-week window in the vessel's career and much of the detail, after plans had arrived from the Australian War Memorial, had to be gleaned from the surviving members of the "Z" Force commando unit which used her in Operation Jaywick against Japanese-occupied Singapore. The cutter, "Gem", wrecked in the 1870's off Rottneest, relied on a WA Newspaper article and research with the Adelaide Maritime Museum. "Bat" and "Dolly", two Victorian steam launches needed contact with the Windermere Steamboat Trust, where the originals are stored and Mike Igglesden's "Oriel" simply had the lines taken directly off the original, as Mike still has her. Several smaller vessels have been built directly from study plans in catalogues. These include the Acorn, a Marisol skiff and a 26' Pilot schooner. Perhaps the oddest in this category is the never-built 22' sloop which Mike Igglesden had meant to build when he lived in Tasmania. Now he's got a model to show what he missed out on.

The final finish is largely down to painting and Brian's techniques are just as basic again. He uses enamel paints, mostly matt, applied with medium to good quality water paint

brushes. Masking of waterlines, etc, is done with Magic Mending tape from Jacksons Art Supplies. Somehow each model looks just as scruffy or pristine as the original. Many other modellers tend to make their models look just a bit too tidy. Brian never makes this mistake. You can practically feel the coal dust on "Skylight", (and there's a chart of the Orkneys inside the wheelhouse door), the oil rags hanging on the edge of deck drums on "Krait" look suitably oily and the brass gleams on "Bat". There's even a working compass in the stern thwart of "Oriel". (and all the bigger models work under electric power and radio control, too).

One could drool on for hours about the fine detail but it wasn't long before someone asked the inevitable question, "How long does it take to build a model?" And yet another surprise lay in the answer: "About four months part-time for a large model, down to two weeks for something small like the Acorn". Even assuming that little gimmicks like a miniature compass or a wheelhouse chart are already in the scrapbox, awaiting a purpose, I can assure you from bitter experience that those times are really fast. Brian has averaged about four models a year for the last two decades and doesn't look like slowing down yet. He builds a huge range of small (up to seventy feet long originals) models, to a scale large enough to incorporate heaps of detail and displays immaculate standards of workmanship. We were extremely lucky to be able to see so many and various examples of his output in July.

A LARGE COMMERCIAL CATAMARAN

Well, if you thought Steve Key's Frers 40 was beamy, last toolbox visit, what would you have thought of the "Ocean Spirit IV", almost complete, at Wavemaster, this time around? At 26m long the cat is not *that* big (they go three times as long over the road at Austal's for car ferries, for instance) but it's huge by amateur standards and when you mention the 12.55m beam it starts to become very big indeed. So big in fact that there's room for quite a decent-sized dance floor at the stern end of the flying deck!

The passenger capacity described last issue was in error, however. She won't take 300 after all, just a mere 216, catered for by a crew of only ten. In fact, looking at the table seating shown on an arrangement plan I could only see seating for for about a hundred, so meals must be in two shifts. Come to think of it, maybe the tables and chairs were just drawn badly out of scale, and not like project home plans where they go the other way and make the furniture too small. Standing in the main saloon, about 15m long by 11m wide, you could certainly pack a huge number of people in, that's for sure.

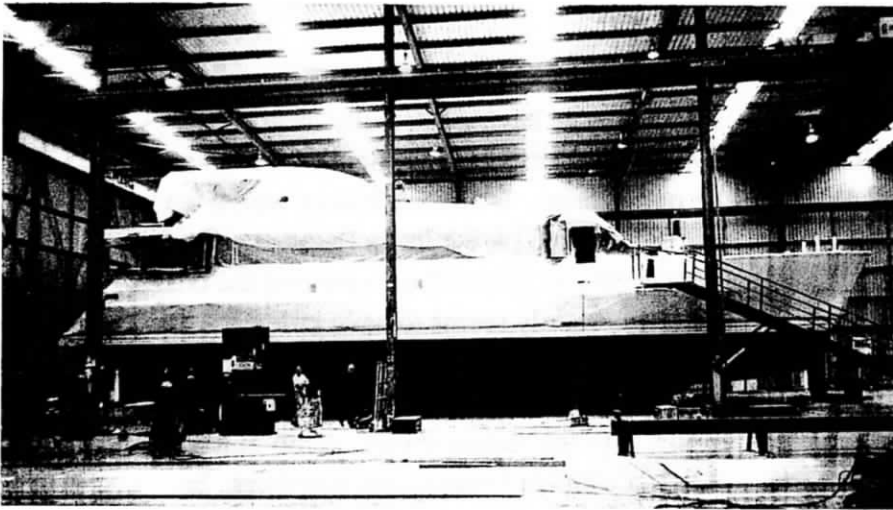
The main deck, which we'll call the saloon deck, covers both hulls and the space between. Above that, only about half as long, is a flying deck which encompasses the control bridge at the forward end and more passenger space aft (including the dance floor). Meanwhile, down in the hulls, the starboard one has the galley arrangements while the port one has male and female heads and bathroom arrangements. Well aft in each hull is a propulsive engine (Perkins M215C - 155kw) and a slightly bigger generating engine - but the power figure was unavailable. Electricity is one commodity they won't be

short of on this charter vessel. For the size of the vessel, neither sort of engine looks especially big and since a great deal of effort has gone into sound deadening (honeycomb composite bulkheads and sound-absorbing roof tiles are the order of the day along with sound and heat insulation on the exhaust systems); I doubt whether the passengers will ever know there's an engine or two running. They certainly won't be bothered, that's for sure.

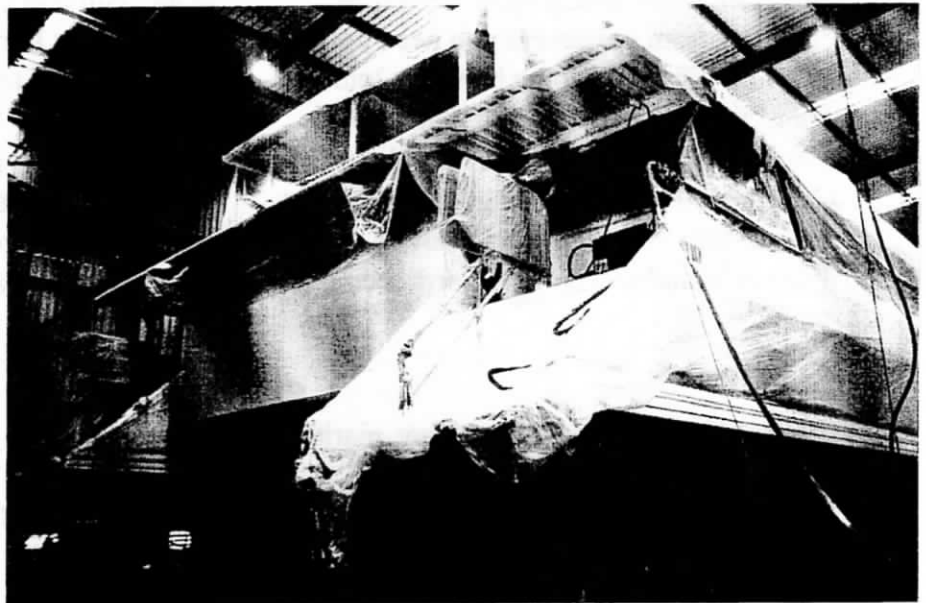
The basic vessel design is by Lock Crowther Designs and yet the auxillary sailing rig is designed by Chris Mitchell in New Zealand. Why didn't the whole lot come out of the one design office? Lock himself designed sailing multi-hulls until they came out of his ears and this one has all the underwater shape of a sailing vessel - no bow bulbs, and a reflexed keel line in the last couple of meters, as if to extend the waterline artificially - just like a Frers 40, in fact. Also, if the engines are small, then the rig is almost huge. It's a motor-sailer with the emphasis on *sailer*. The mast reaches to 42m above the base line, which means it's about 38m long, anyway, with a main area of 178 sq m and jib of 103 sq m. That's a lot of sail for a party boat and I predict she'll go a lot faster under sail than the ten knots expected under power. Reefing down won't be necessary until the wind reaches 25 knots, however.

The furling system is roller *within the mast*, the mast having been shipped out from Hood (UK) in kit form. Quite a lot of work has had to go into completing it because the fore and aft extrusions are separate and eash is only half the necessary length. So a lot of welding has gone into completing the basic mast blank, including welding in side plates which

THAT BIG CAT



A sheerplan view. Those are people standing below the waterline.



Looking up to the sterns, steps up both transoms. Pity about the plastic.



Roller furling gear, in the mast, near the base. Gooseneck brackets welded just above it.

counter-sterned hull is based on an elegant fibreglass moulding sourced from, of all places, Pt Lincoln, Sth Aust, and most of the wood-work was fitted at a yard in O'Connor before final finishing at Alan's place. With the boat just about ready to go Alan had a nasty accident with a router and decided to mothball the boat for a couple of months during his recovery. That was where things came unstuck because he wrapped the boat in plastic and moved it outdoors. It was so well wrapped it couldn't breathe and the resulting condensation lifted a lot of varnish off. Fortunately that error will have been corrected by the time of our visit on October 14th. So, to see one of these delightful creations from yesteryear you need to be at 123B Lockhart St, Como between 2pm and 5pm. The house is on a rear, battle-axed, block, in that section of the street between Canning Hwy and Manning Rd. Alan says it's virtually behind Henley Motors. This is a rare boat and will be well worth seeing.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Firstly, we're having difficulty locating "Wooden Boats" by John Scarlett - seems to be out of print. If anyone knows where we can get a copy, please let us know.

On the subject of the library, leaving the boxes behind certainly seems to have killed interest, doesn't it? The fact remains that lugging four or five boxes of books upstairs each meeting, along with the supper things, is too much to ask of a couple of committee members. So we'll try a compromise. Geoff will bring one box only, of assorted general interest books, to see if you are interested in the library idea at all. But don't forget, you only have to find a title on the library list that takes your fancy and ring Geoff to have it made available for your perusal.

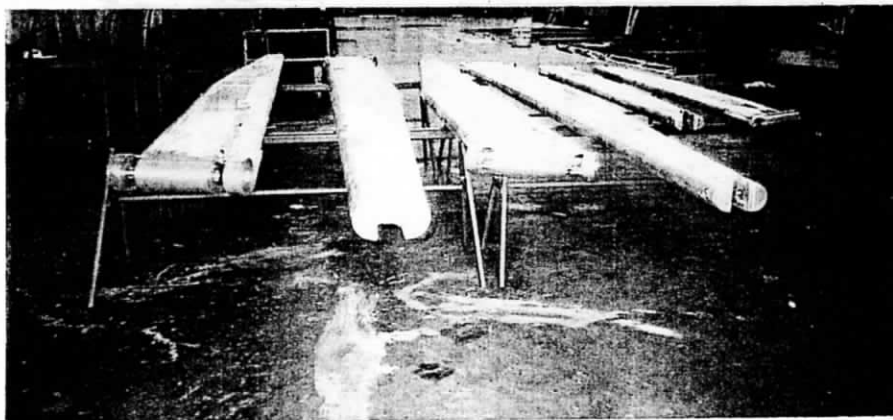
And finally, we may not have any pamphlets ready yet, but we are active on a national website. If interested, try www.woodenboats.org.au See you on the 26th.

CALENDAR

Tues, 26th Sept, Ross Shardlow, maritime artist and historian. MBSC, 7.30 for 8.00pm.

Saturday, 14th Oct, Victorian steam launch by Alan Maffey. 123B Lockhart St, Como. At rear, between Canning Hwy and Manning Rd.

Monday, 16th October, Committee meeting



The spreaders of the Wavemaster Cat. A pity I didn't stand someone beside them for scale. They're huge.

space the fore and aft extrusions further apart, before mast bases, cap, spreader bases, etc, etc, go on. It's a triple spreader rig, incidentally, and the lower spreaders looked to be at least three metres per side - nothing's small around this boat. The furling's by hydraulic motors and this, combined with final halyard tensions, and presumably sheet settings, is all controlled from the bridge. Sail crew appear to have been almost automated out of existence.

Build time to get the boat to near-complete has been only five months and we were told that launch day was only one week away. That seemed believable when viewed from the outside with just the masking tape to come off some of the painted waterlines. But inside it was a different story with a great deal of finishing left to do. Honeycomb panels all

need edge trim strips, followed by varnish, decks need filling and painting, the motors still have to be connected to the propellor shafts, and then there's the furniture to install. One can't help thinking it's going to be a mad rush at the end, like some other things we could mention, but no doubt Wavemaster will get it all done in the end.

We are indebted to secretary, John McKillop, of the Wavemaster design team, for arranging the visit and the closeness of the launch date explains why the visit had to be this month - it was a very worthwhile project to examine, even if out of our personal leagues. Next time we'll be back to an amateur project of the sort of size we can all tackle at home. But for now, thanks John, it was a fascinating view of how the other half lives.

ADMINISTRATION

OUR NEXT EVENING MEETING

Maritime artist, historian and researcher, Ross Shardlow, will be the guest speaker at our next evening meeting, to be held at MBSC on Tuesday, Sept 26. Ross is perhaps best known for his beautiful, precise, sailing ship water colours and it is to be hoped that he will have one or two to show on the night. More recently, however, he has been involved with the design and installation of the replica pilot boat/whale boat which has now been displayed in the restored boatshed on Rottneest Island. (Brian Lemon was just starting a model of this when he addressed us two months ago) We expect that Ross will describe this project and link it to an earlier visit of his to Mystic Seaport Museum before going into his art pieces and the research attached thereto. Perhaps we can get him talking about earlier projects such as his Anzac Day stamp set of a couple of years ago and his much earlier proposals for a Port

Heritage Precinct (especially interesting in the light of present developments). Ross is a modest person of great ability and his talk should not be missed.

TOOLBOX VISIT

Having seen a super modern, super professional product in a large aluminium catamaran at Wavemaster for our last visit (now safely launched and almost away) we return to amateur boat building for this month's visit. The project on this occasion is a replica Victorian steam launch being built by Alan Maffey of Como. These were open launches, usually counter-sterned ("fantailed" if you're an American), usually topped by a canvas awning and mostly, but not always, steam-powered. Your editor has a small, (20') one, petrol powered, but Alan's is bigger at 26' and powered by the much more characterful steam, using a steam plant built by Scarborough engineer, Doug Baker. The