Sydney Model Shipbuilders Club Inc.
CHATTERBOX
www.smsc.org.au

SPECIAL ISSUE #26 **FEBRUARY 2025**

"SHENANDOAH OF SARK"

A photographic review by Phil Janson

Editor's Note: *It is unusual for Chatterbox to publish a Special Issue for a model built by a modeller who is not a member of Sydney Model Shipbuilders Club, but this model by Phil Janson is so unusual that it should be given as wide a circulation as possible.*

Phil Janson is a Swiss academic in retirement who is a friend of SMSC. He first approached the Club with his build of the Mantua "Mercator" model when he discussed the issues he encountered with Michael Butcher whose build of that model is a feature of Special Issue #13.

Whilst a relative newcomer to the world of model ships, Phil is anything but a novice to modelling, he has extensive experience of some 65 years with model trains, this is where he most likely developed his sense of scale and precision, creating fully automated switches and signals with relays, digital decoders and integrated logic gate circuits long before these features were offered by any manufacturer.

His model shipbuilding involved a bunch of plastic Revell models as well as a wooden kit of the "KonTiki". Then, some 30 years ago, he built a Billing Boats "Bluenose" kit.

After an incredibly long gap of time, his next project was the Mantua kit of "Mercator" referred to above and when he finished that model he immediately immersed himself in a scratch build of "Shenandoah of Sark", a famous three-masted schooner with a steel hull, built in New York in 1902 originally commissioned as a private yacht for the wealthy American banker Gibson Fahnestock. It is named "Shenandoah" after the native American Indian tribe, as the figurehead underneath the bow indicates.

Fahnestock's retirement plan was to spend his time on board "Shenandoah", the ultimate luxury yacht on which he could travel through the Caribbean and Mediterranean.

She has had a series of private owners since, had many name changes, and currently she is again named "Shenandoah", and is registered in Sark (hence reference to that place in the current name) and is available for charter.

"Shenandoah of Sark" has been owned by aristocrats, royalty and even smugglers. She has hosted fabulous parties and was hidden away during times of war. She's sailed in regattas and gone around the world multiple times.

As a three-masted topsail schooner, the foremast carried two yard-supported rectangular topsails, above its gaff-rigged mainsail, whereas the other two masts carried two triangular topsails above their gaff-rigged mainsails.

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During WW2 (when named "Atlantide"), she was hidden in a Danish shipyard in Troense, where one engine and all masts were removed, to make the ship “not seaworthy” and thus useless for the German occupying forces.
After the war, the ship was brought back into shape, the topsails were taken down and she became a three-masted gaff-rigged schooner. In 1994-95 she was restored by the McMullen & Wing shipyard in Auckland, New Zealand (she has been restored yet again in 2010).
Phil purchased the restoration plans used by McMillan & Wing and adapted those plans and other (copyrighted) drawings and photographs from the internet.
The following photographic detail of Phil’s completed build of “Shenandoah of Sark” contains designs, sketches and photographs created by Phil and avoids the use of that copyrighted material which is still freely available on the internet for anyone interested in searching for that material.
We thank Phil for allowing us the opportunity to celebrate his beautiful model by this Special Issue.

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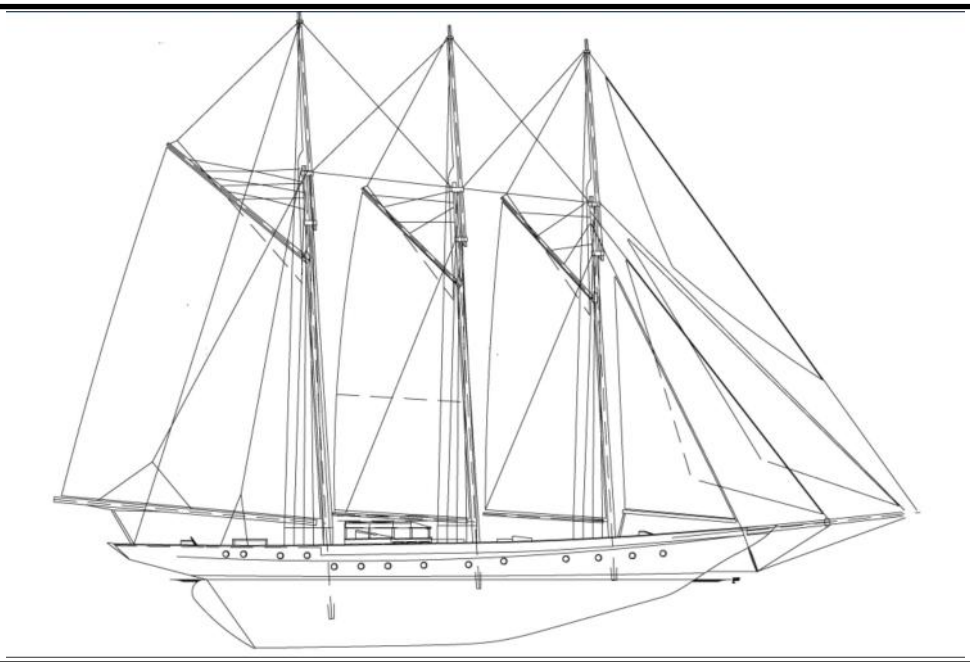

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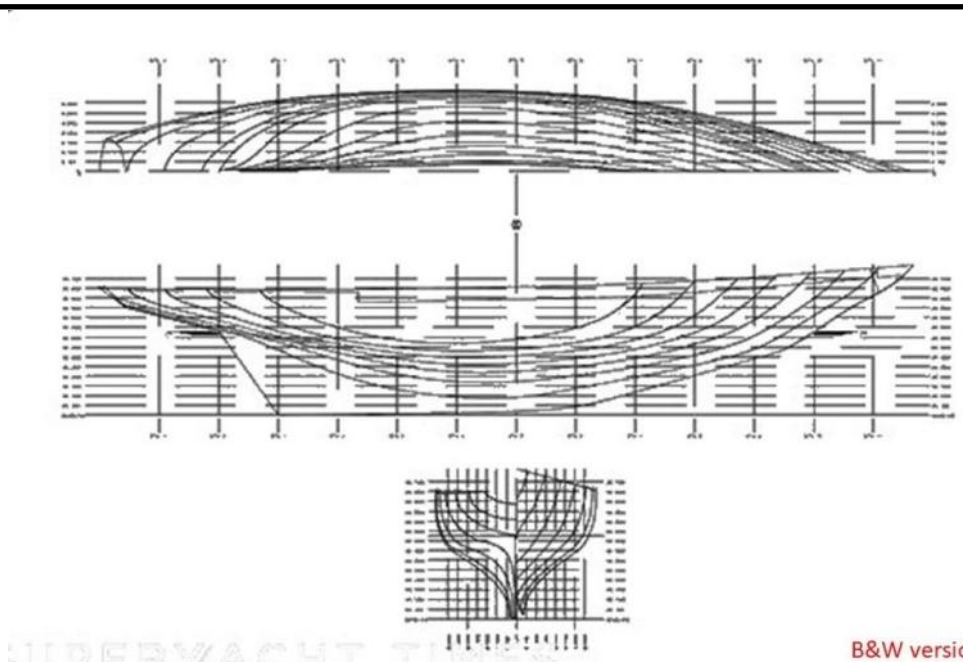

B&W version

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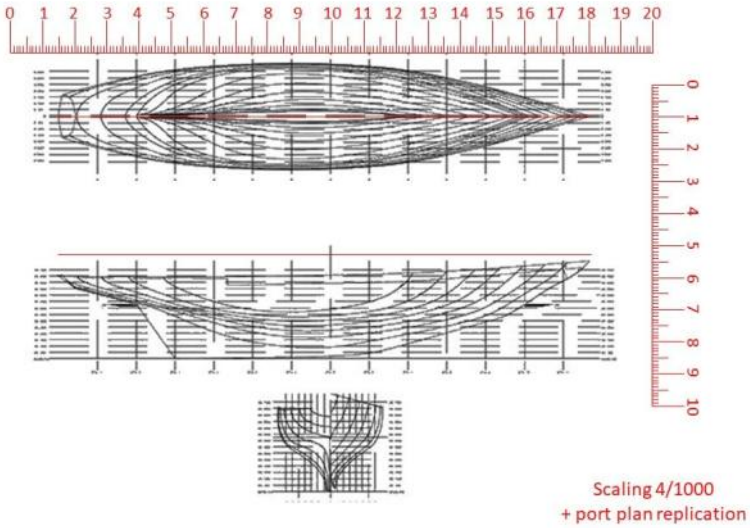

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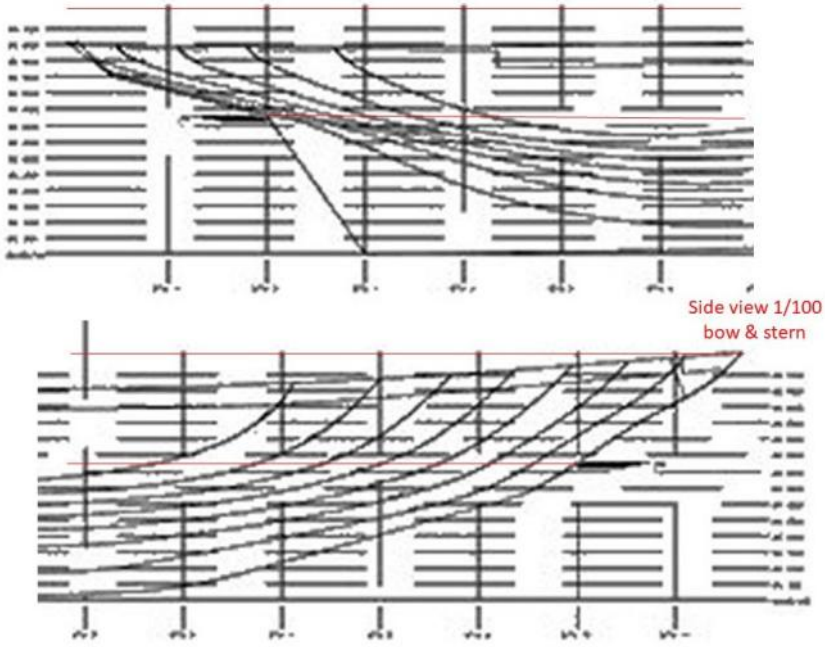

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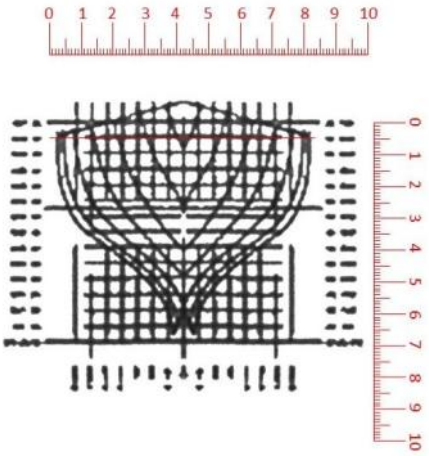

Elevation bow 1/100

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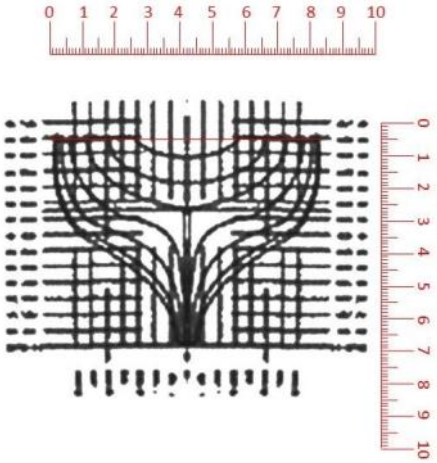

Elevation stern 1/100

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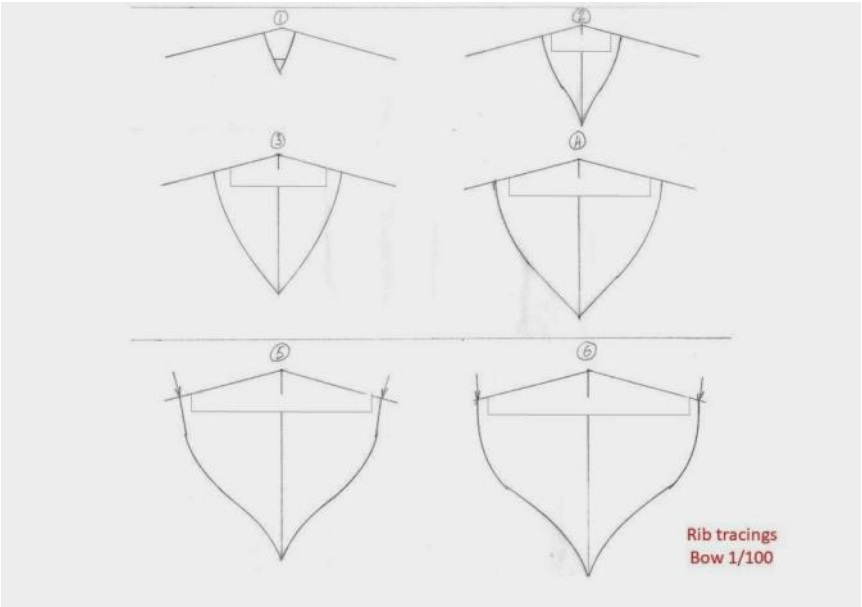

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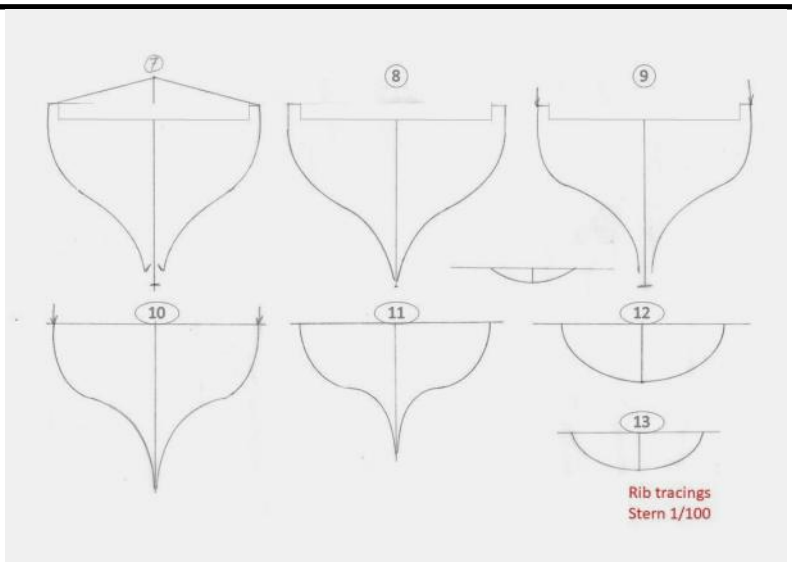

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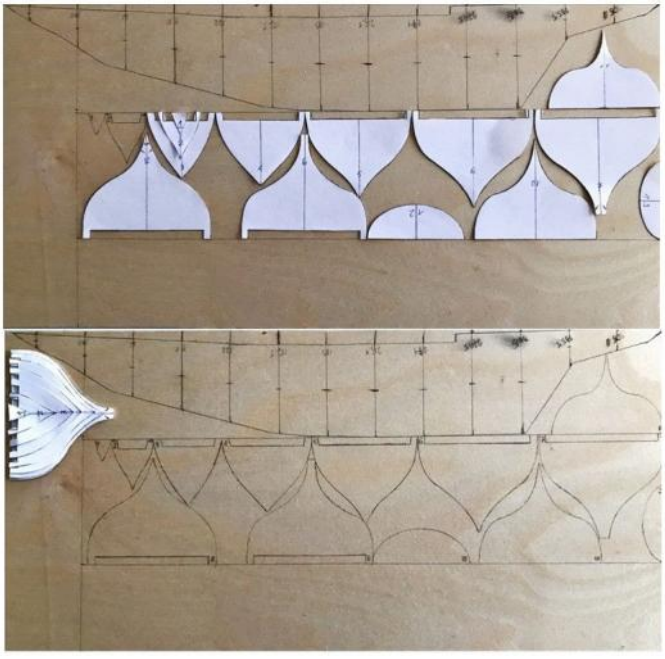
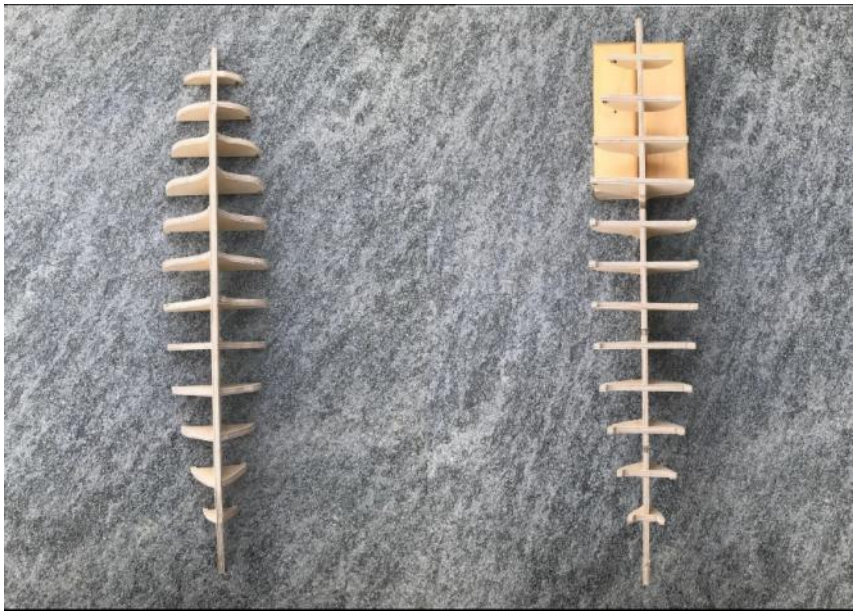


Hull profile + rib tracings lightly glued to plywood

Hull profile + rib tracings on 4mm plywood

11.



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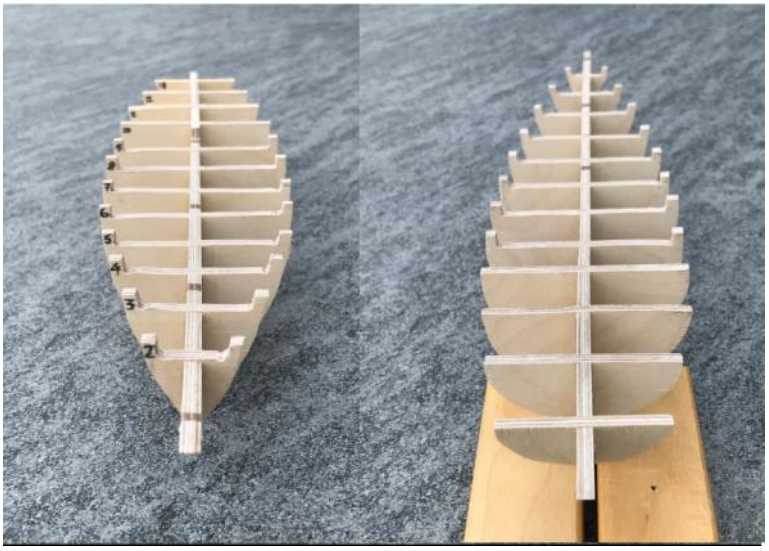

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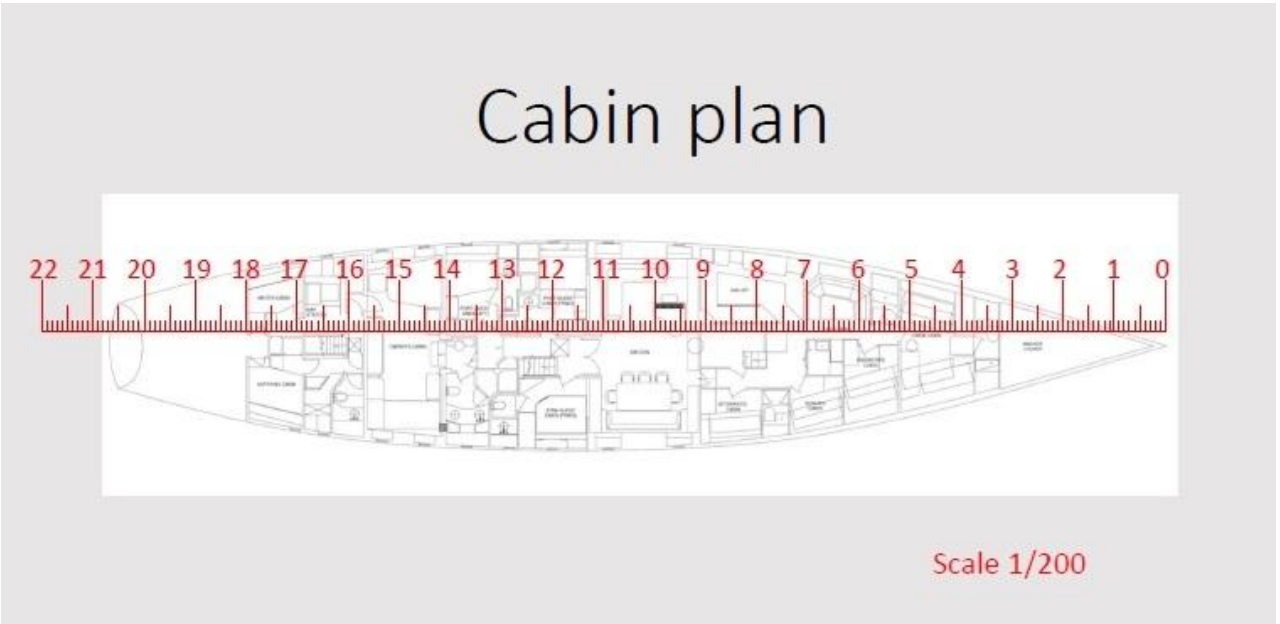

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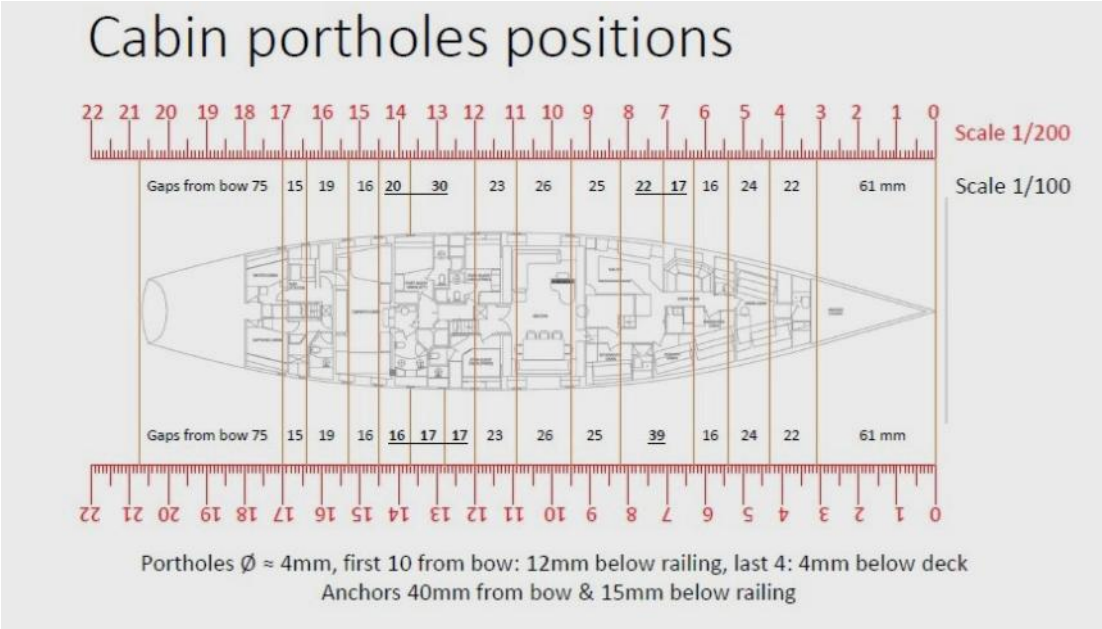

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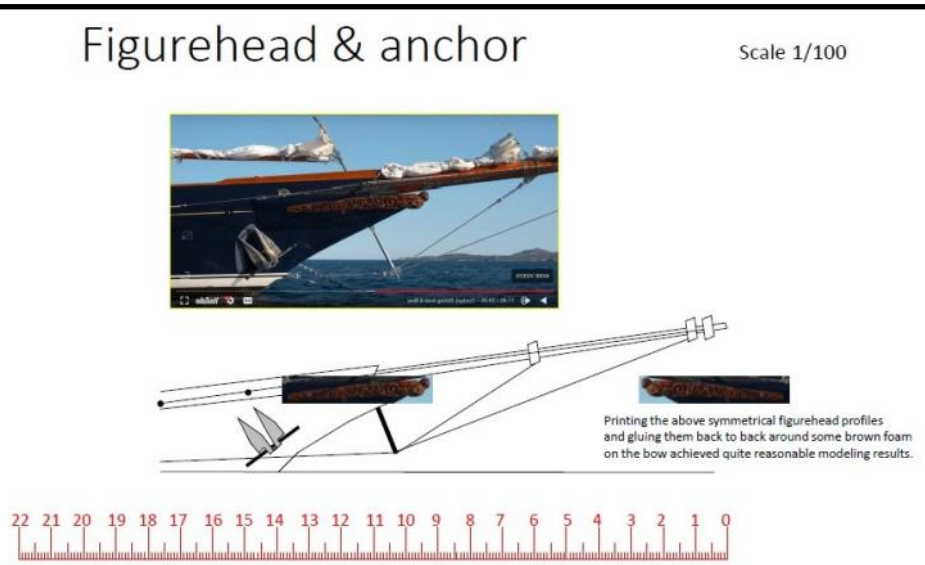

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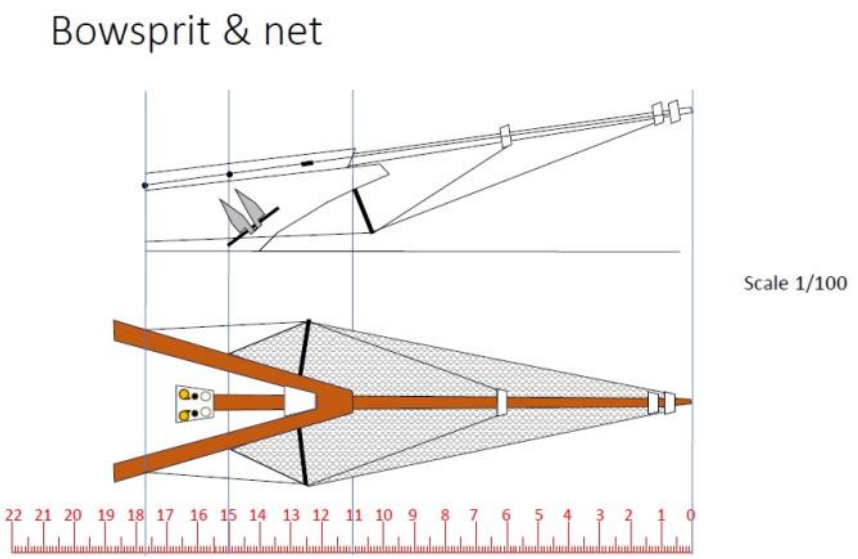

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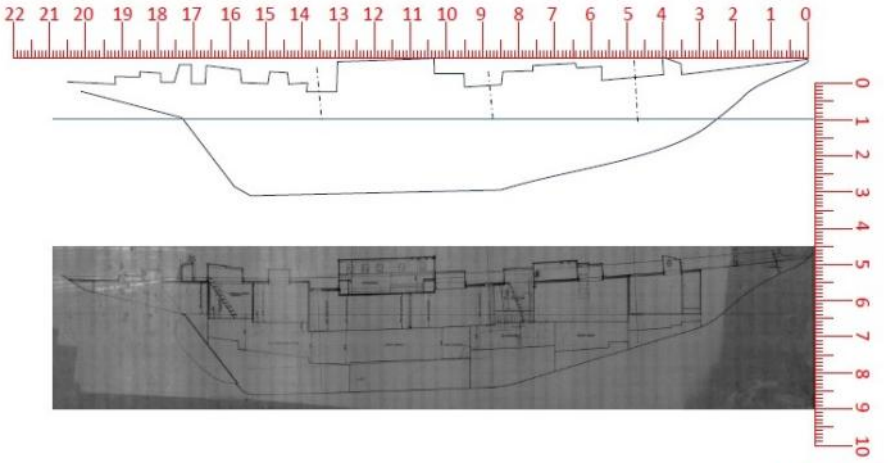
24 Assembly comments

Deck furniture can of course be built out of wood, the traditional way, which was used for the larger pieces
An often more convenient material is foam rubber, easier to cut and glue cleanly, which was used for smaller pieces.
Yet another alternative is clay material that can be kneaded and then baked.
This is particularly useful for modelling objects exhibiting sculpted non-geometric shapes, such as the compass for instance.
Last is the ever-growing range of possibilities offered by 3D-modeling software, e.g. Blender, and 3D-printers ... for the net model.
These latter methods take away some of the romantic crafting challenges of modeling but are easier and give better results.
They are of course more expensive and require learning 3D software, but that is by itself a whole other interesting craft.
Models made with any of the latter three methods can always be covered with thin sheets of fine wood for better finish.

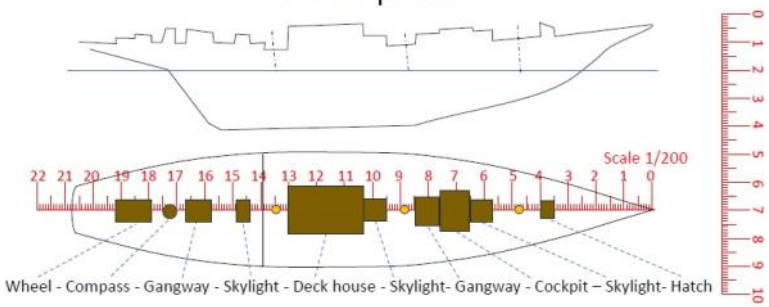
NB: once assembled, deck furniture was not installed on deck until all masts, gaffs, booms, and sails were mounted on deck and all rigging meant to attach to nail banks at the foot of masts and along the bowsprit was properly installed and fixed.
Installing deck furniture earlier does notably complicate fixing rigging to the mast nail banks and the bowsprit.
Further, rigging meant to attach to port & starboard nail banks was not fixed there until the deck furniture was installed.
Doing that earlier would get in the way of installing deck furniture.
Along the same lines, the shrouds were installed last to allow easy access to port and starboard nail banks.
The outside railing, davits and walkway are best installed last, after the shrouds.

25 Deck Section



Scale 1/200

26 Deck plan



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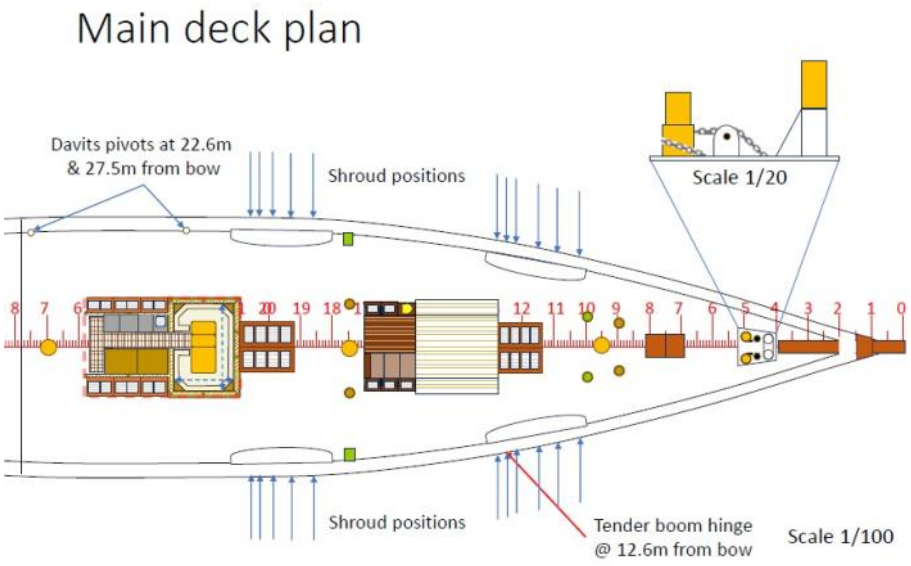

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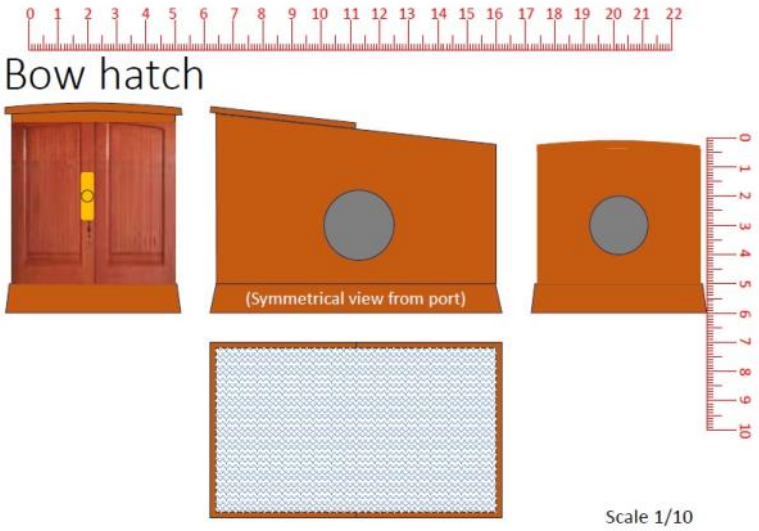

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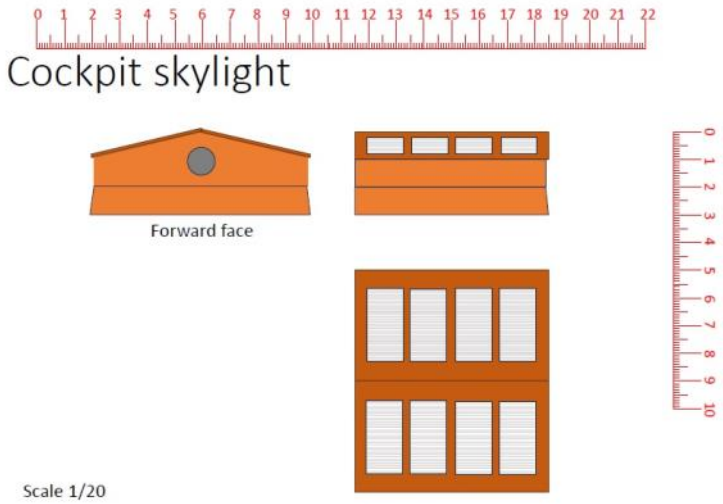

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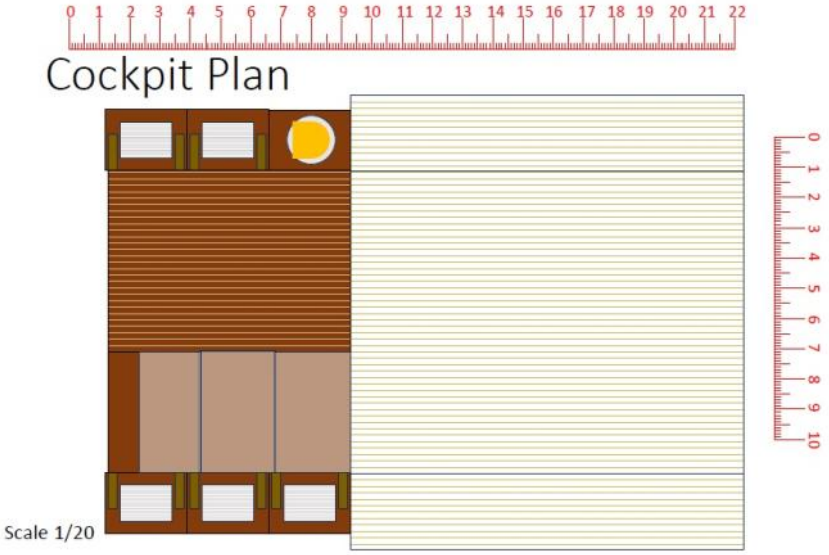

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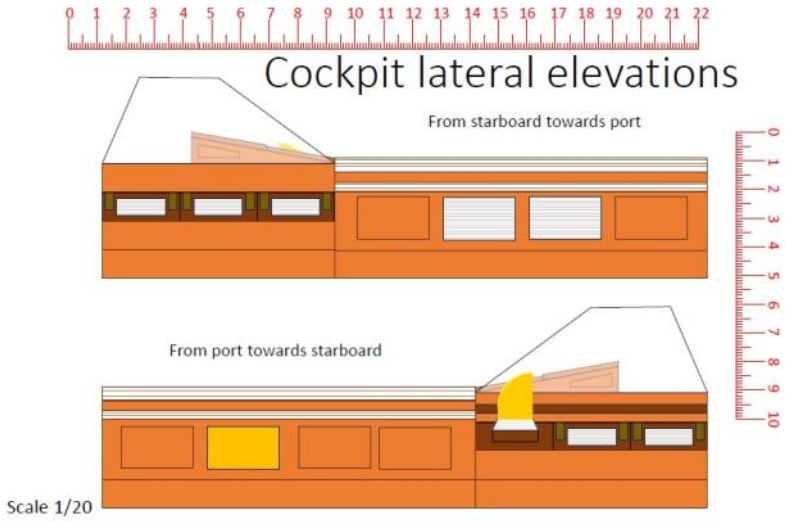

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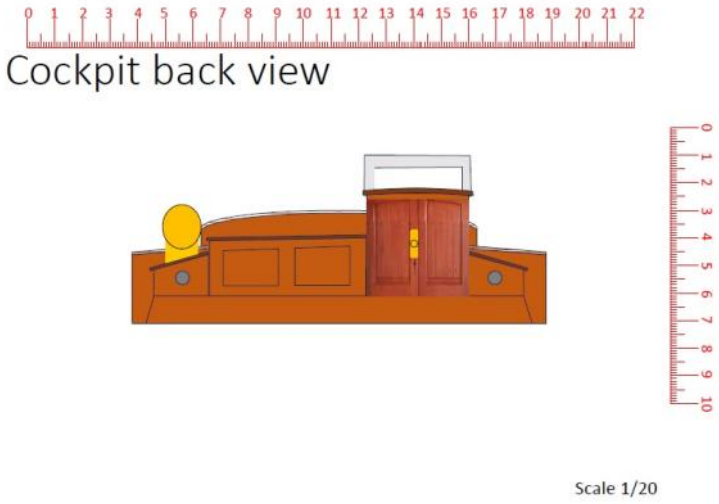

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Cockpit

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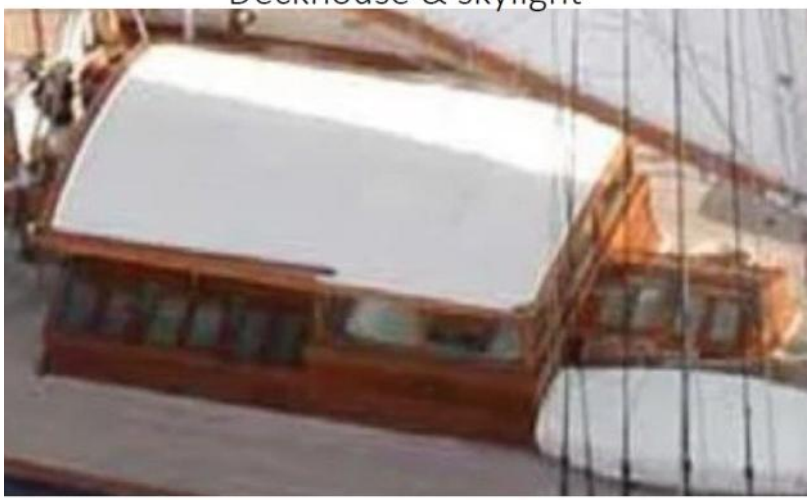
Deckhouse & skylight



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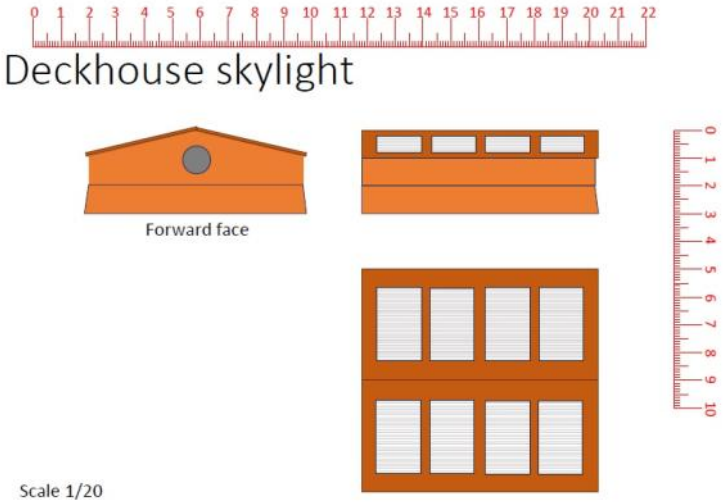

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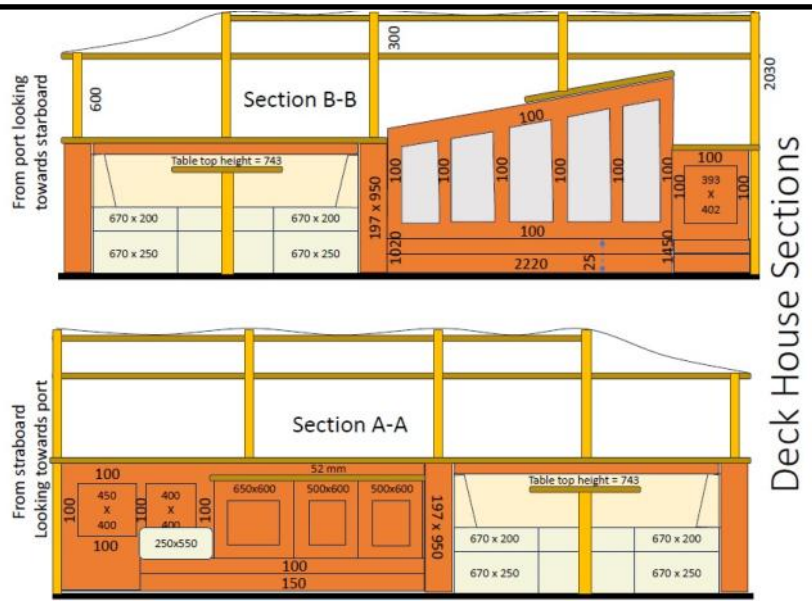

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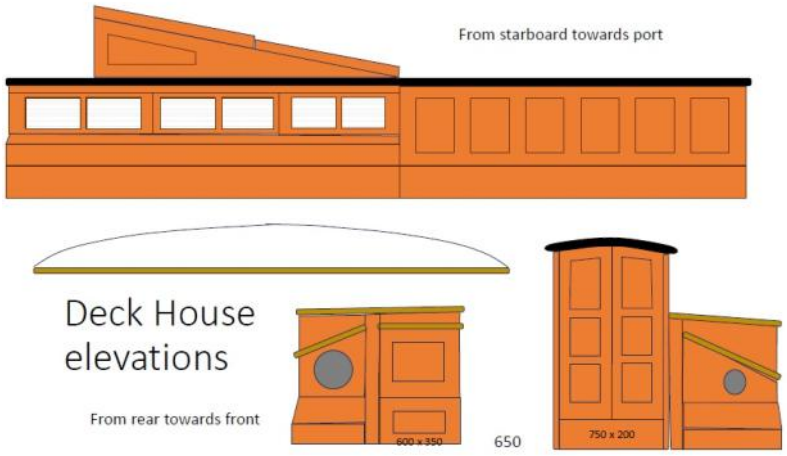

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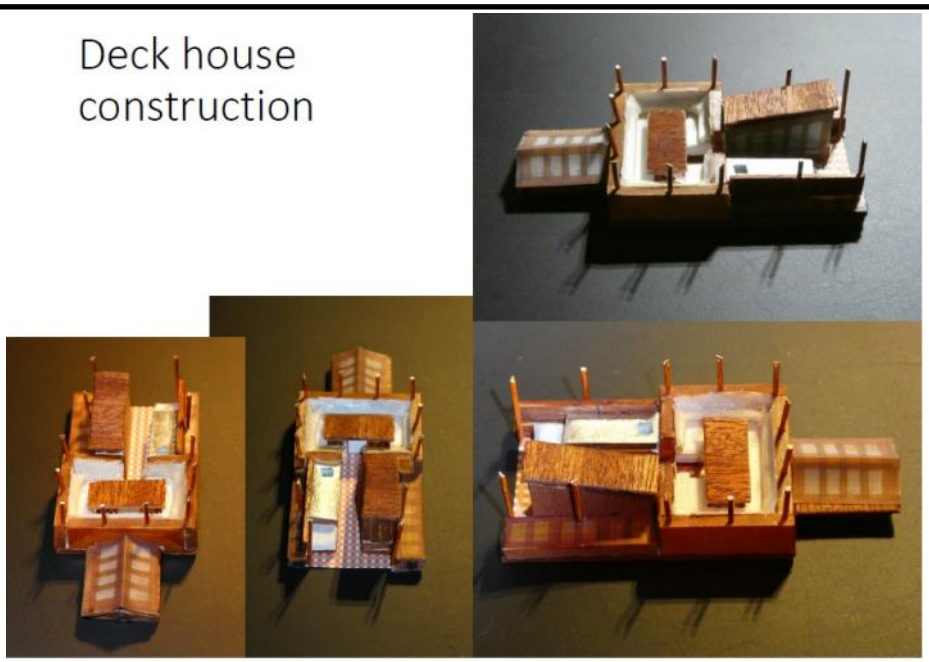
Deck house construction



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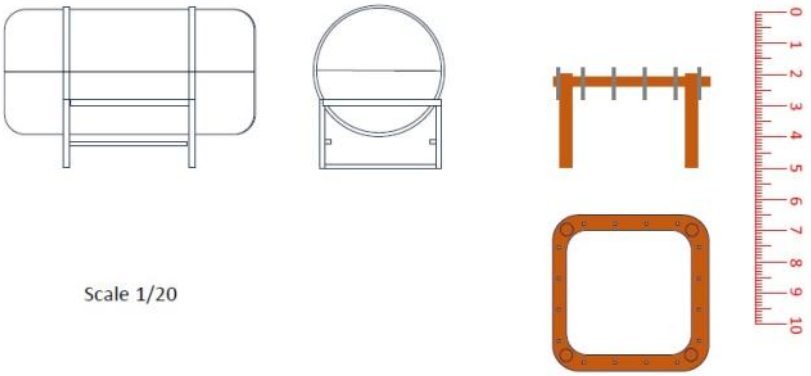
Deck house

41

Liferafts & mast nail banks



Scale 1/20

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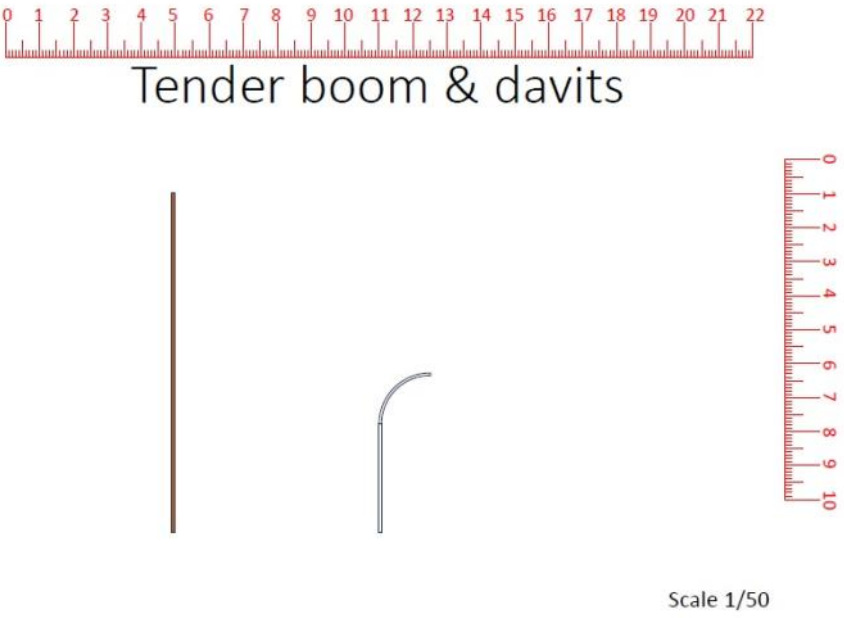

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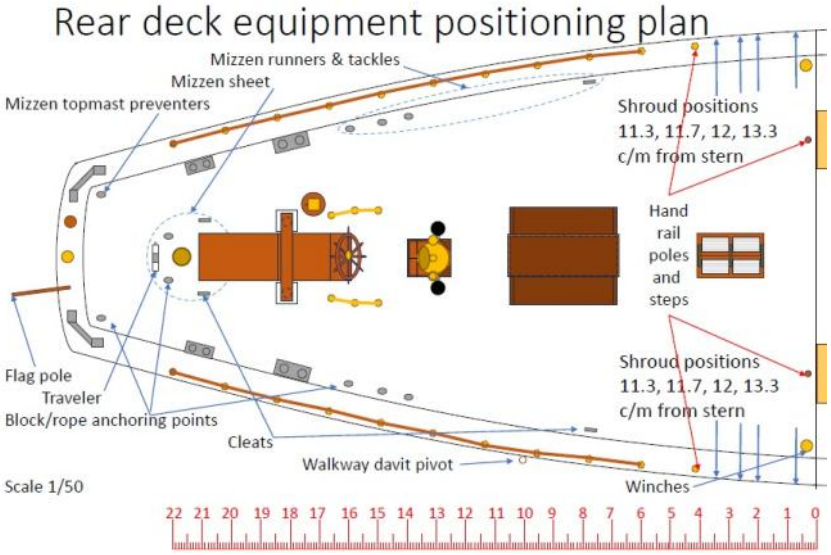

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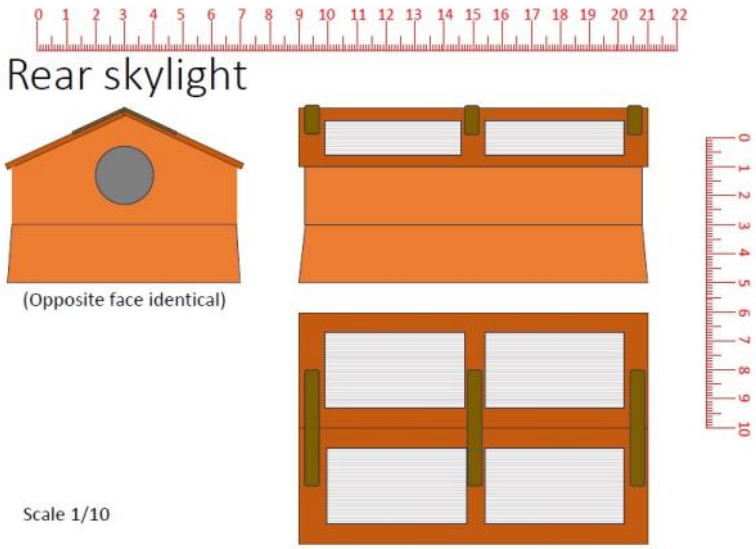

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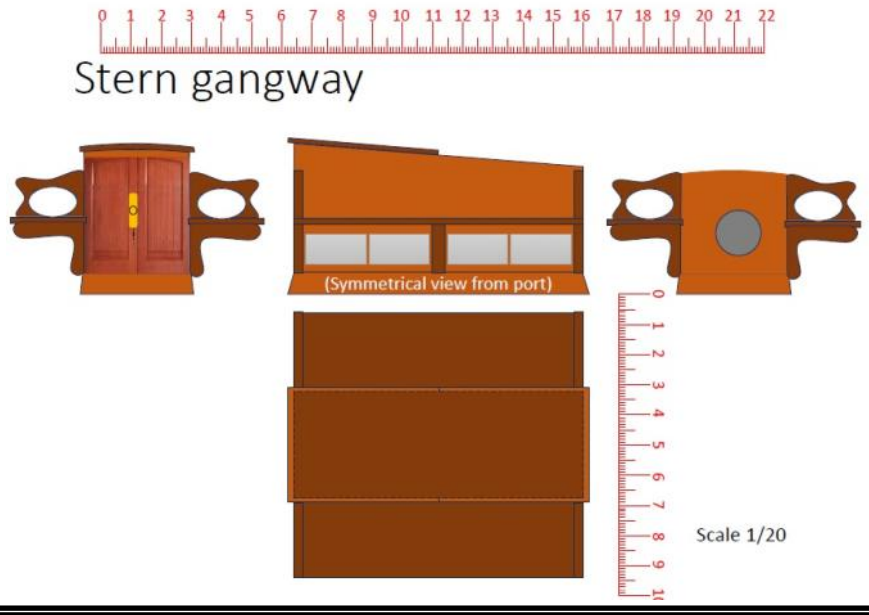

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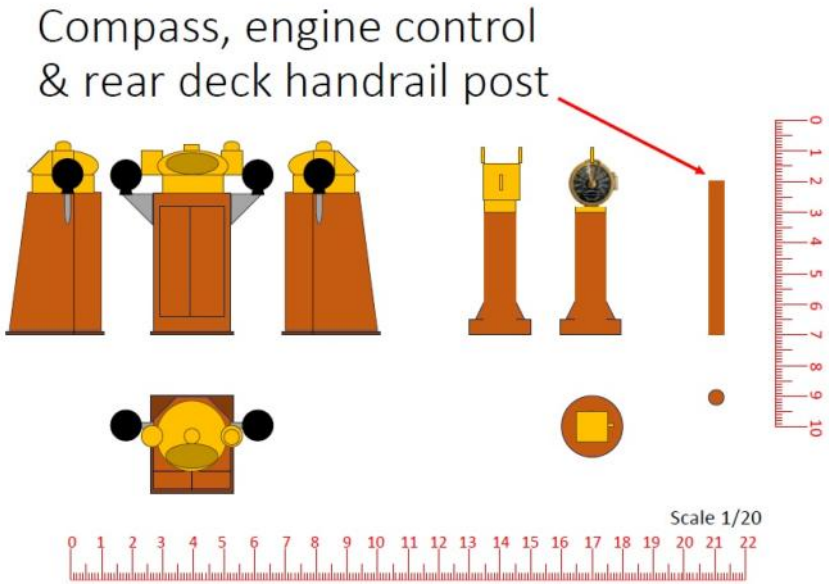

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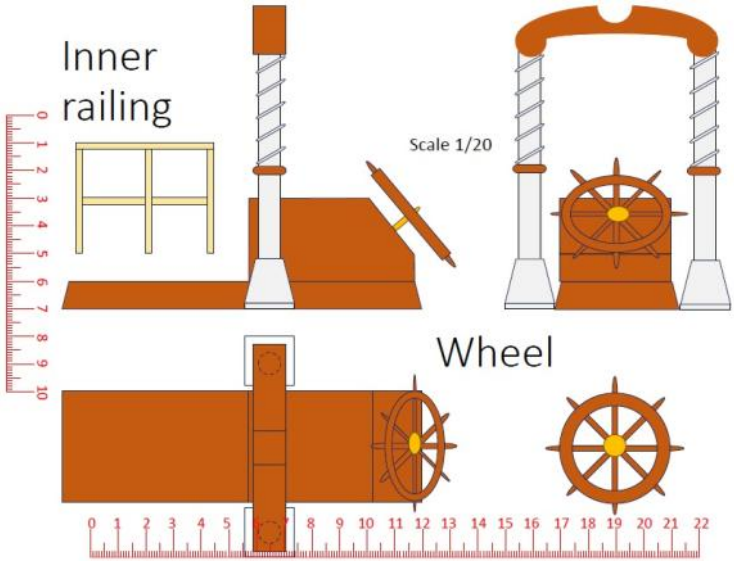

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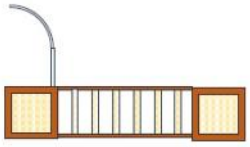
48

Stern gangway,
compass
engine control,
wheel

49

Railing & walkway

Scale 1/50



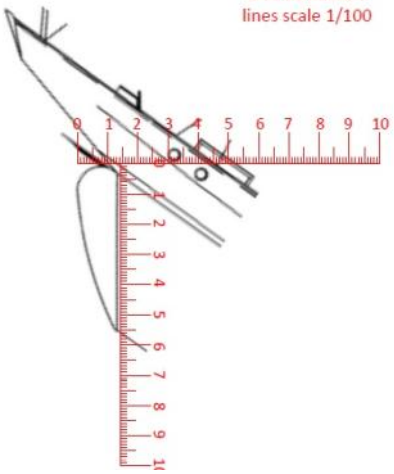
50.

Rudder & flag

Scale 1/100

Scale 1/50

Side view from
on-line specs
with calibration
lines scale 1/100



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51 Assembly comments

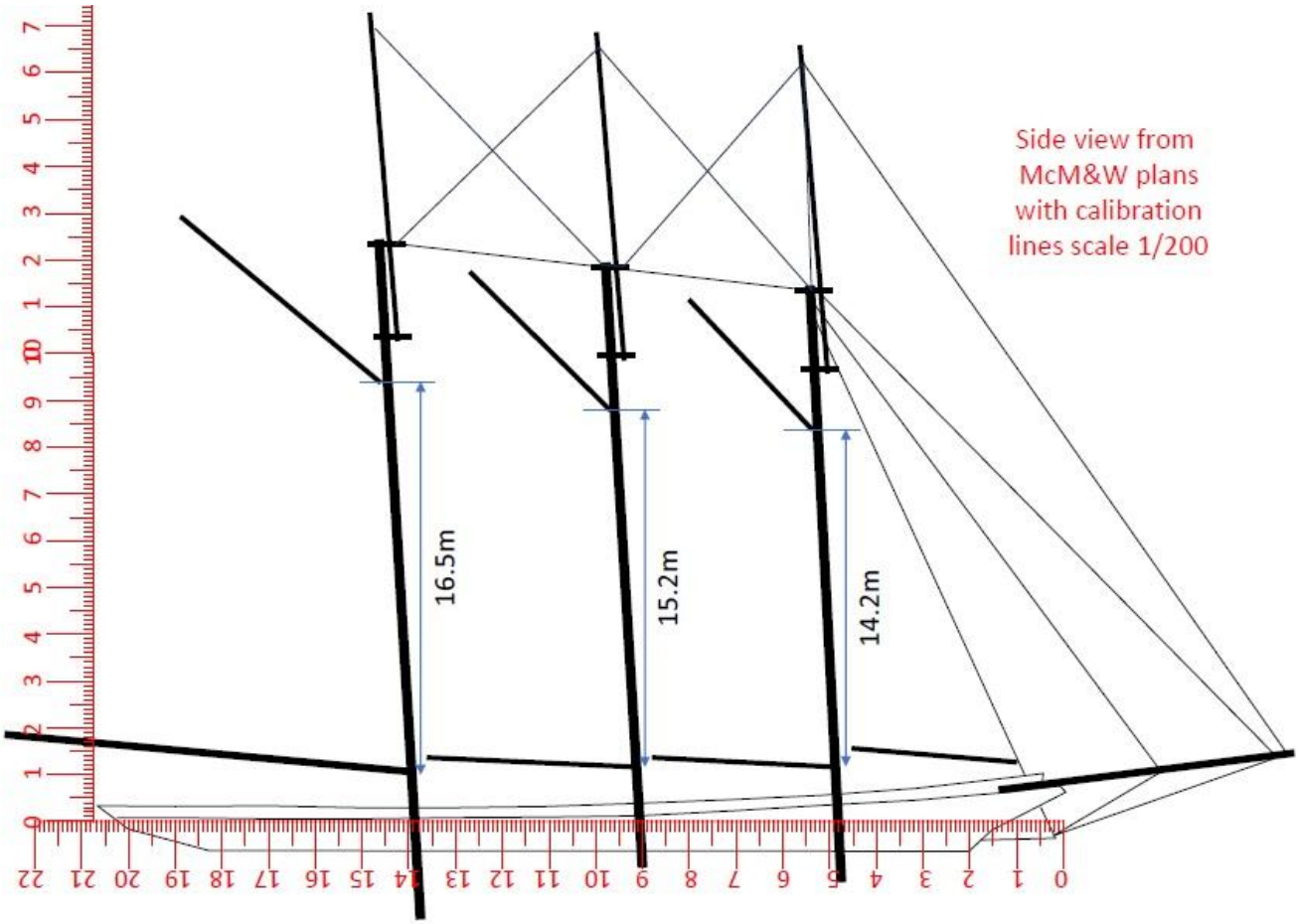
In the absence of commercial kits or even readily available plans for modelling this yacht, everything had to be done 'from scratch'.
Equipped with this material, newcomers to ship modelling would naturally be inclined to build things as a shipyard would, bottom-up.
Without detailed instructions, this is however delicate and risky.
Once masts are glued into the deck, tying, gluing, or threading ropes and blocks onto or through them requires pretty steady hands.
Similarly, once shrouds are installed, they get in the way of tying running rigging to nail banks.

It is thus advisable to assemble and equip masts, gaffs, booms, sails with blocks, cleats, nails, and rigging before fixing anything on deck.
Cut sails and attach to them whatever ropes and blocks they will need, then do the same for gaffs, booms, masts, etc.
Then mount sails onto spars, sails-spars assemblies onto masts, and thread the 'high' ends of all ropes through their respective blocks.
Only then, glue fully rigged masts-spars-sails assemblies onto deck, all lower ends of ropes and wire shrouds hanging loose.
Then fix those where they belong on deck, nail banks, and bowsprit. As a rule of thumb, proceed bow- to stern. bottom-up & inside-out.
Fixing upper items before lower ones or outer ones before inner ones would later get in the way of fixing lower / inner items.

Which ropes run from which above-deck end to which on-deck end through which blocks is listed in the following rigging tables.
These were derived from the McMullen & Wing rigging schedules (which differ from some of the pictures and videos available online).

Only then is the time to mount in sequence: deck furniture, stern railing, walkway, davits, tender mooring pole, & navigation lights

52



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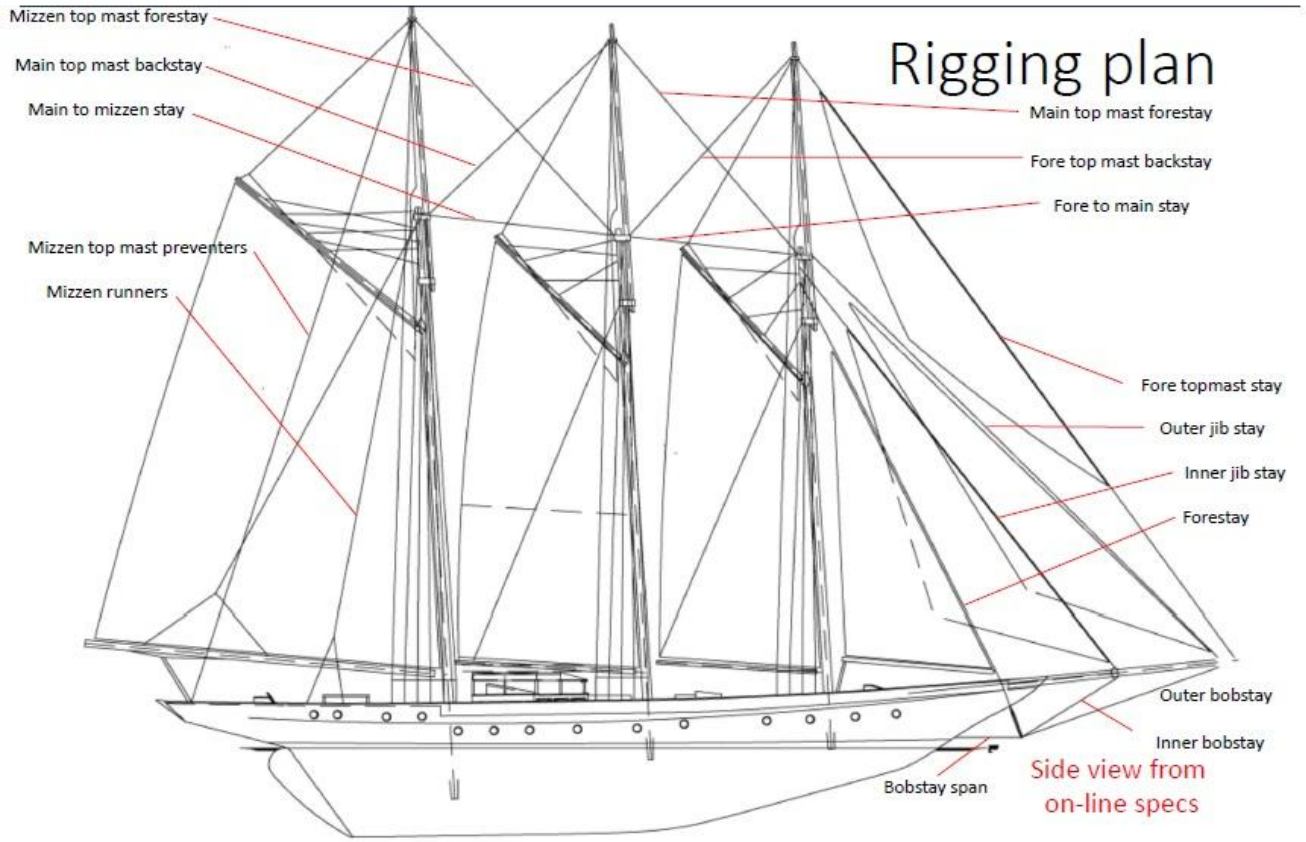

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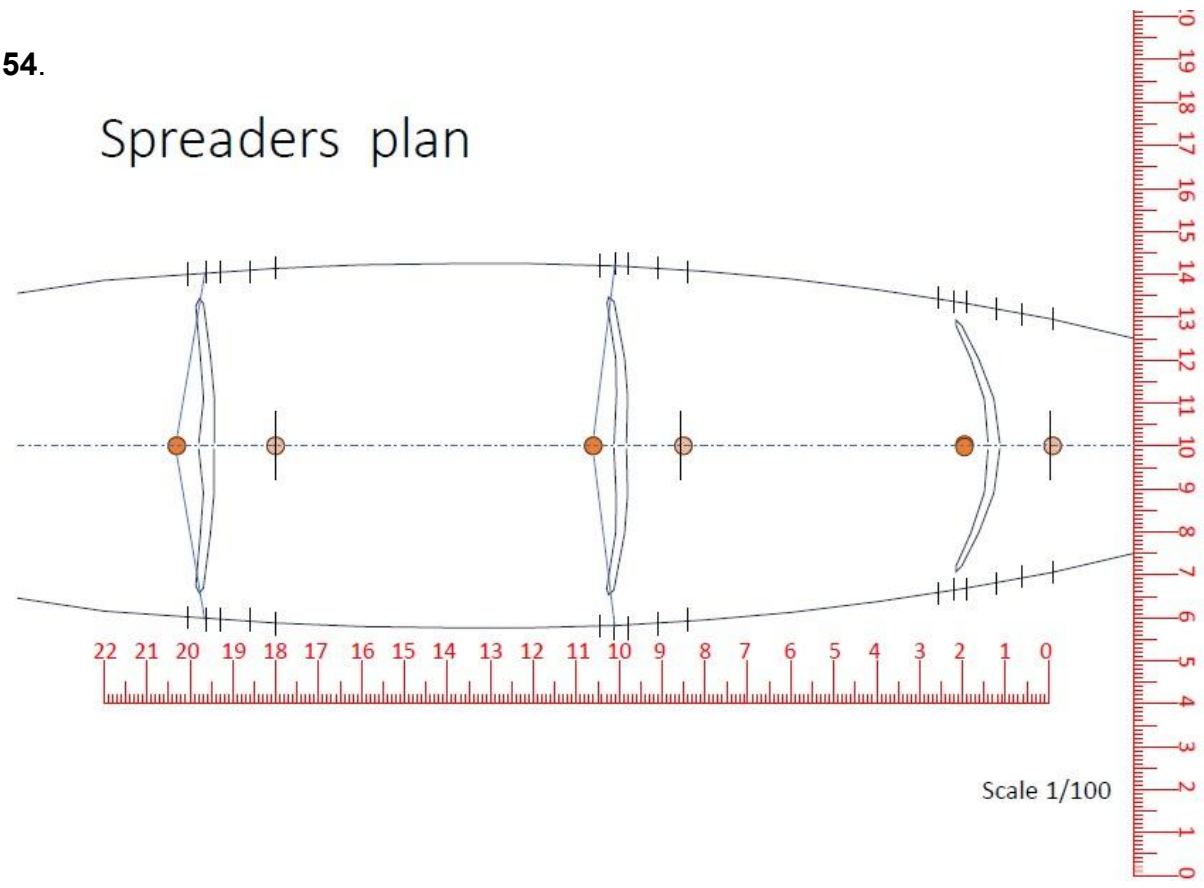

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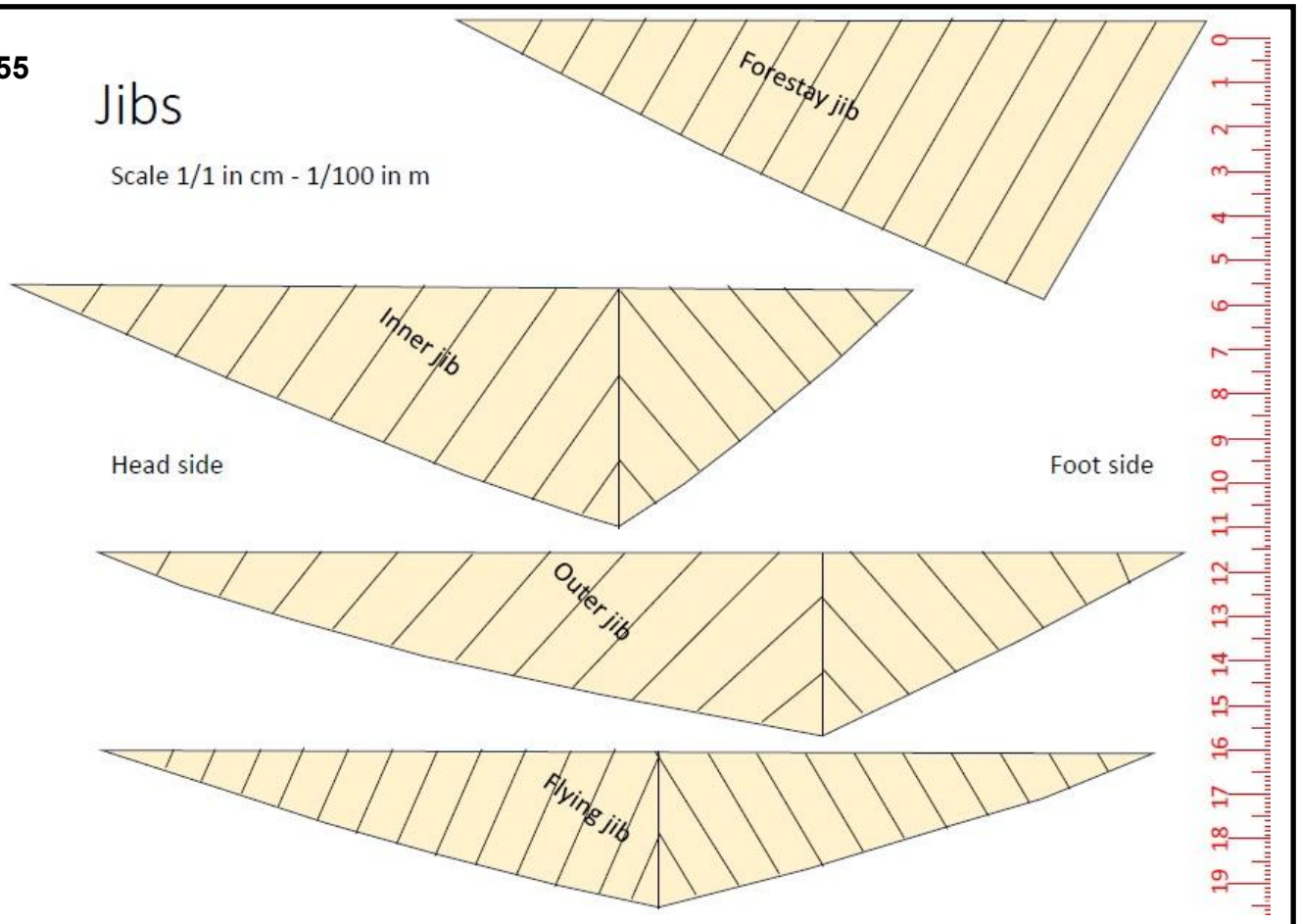
55

Jibs

Scale 1/1 in cm - 1/100 in m



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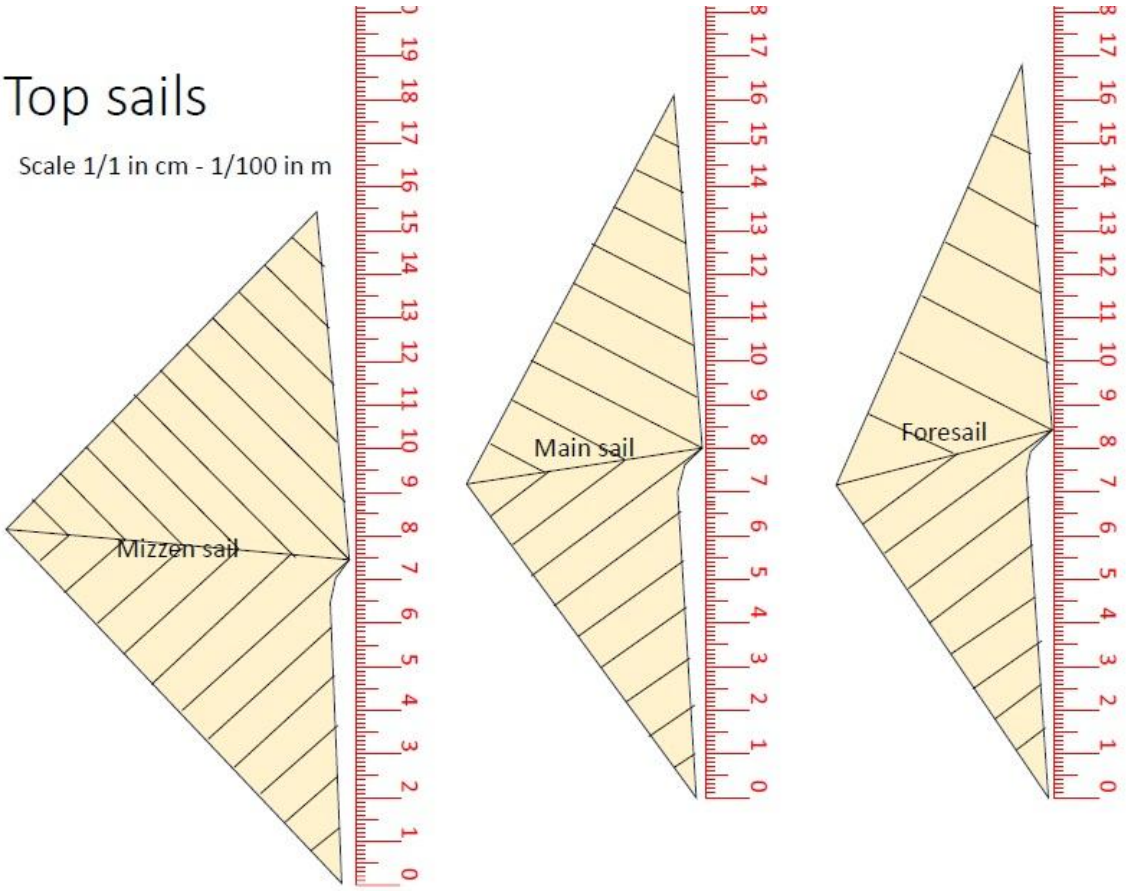
Top sails

Scale 1/1 in cm - 1/100 in m



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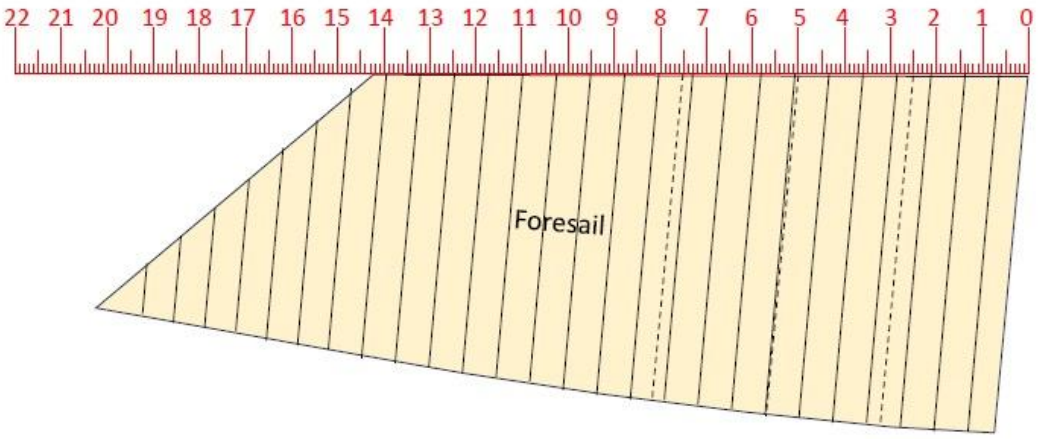
Foresail & reefing points

Scale 1/1 in cm - 1/100 in m

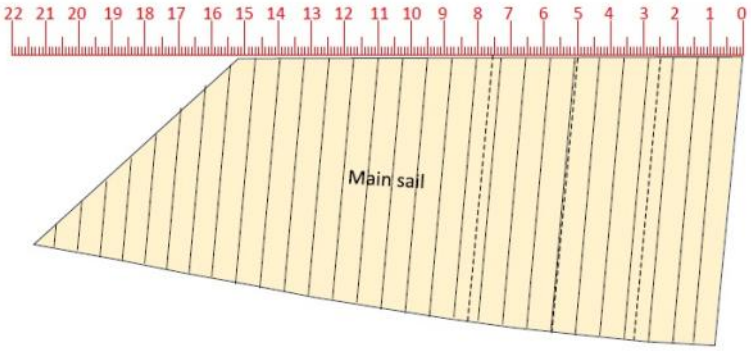


One tip about sails: many people seem to prefer modelling sailing ships without their sails – fine, this is a matter of personal choice.
In case one prefers modelling them with sails, one frequent problem is that sails hang in some unnatural shape.
One trick to get them to bulge, as if catching wind, is to use inflatable balloons and hair spray.
Inflate a balloon to the desired volume / curvature for each sail, stick it to a table, spread the sail over it, spray, and let dry.
Eventually repeat after mounting the sails onto spars and masts to compensate any mishaps during to manipulation.

58

Main sail & reefing points

Scale 1/1 in cm - 1/100 in m



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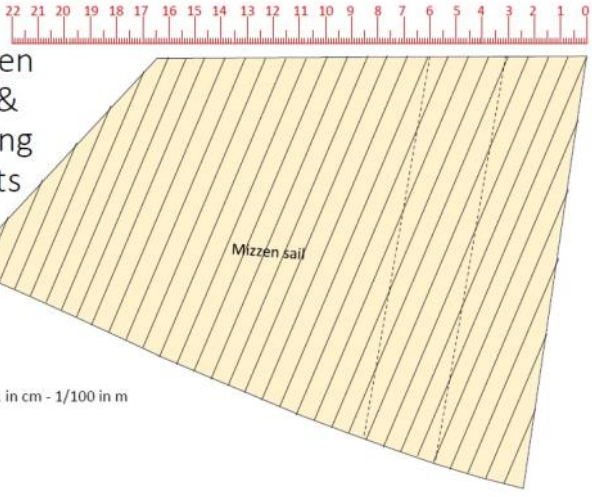
Mizzen sail & reefing points



Scale 1/1 in cm - 1/100 in m

cont. p. 23

cont. from p. 22

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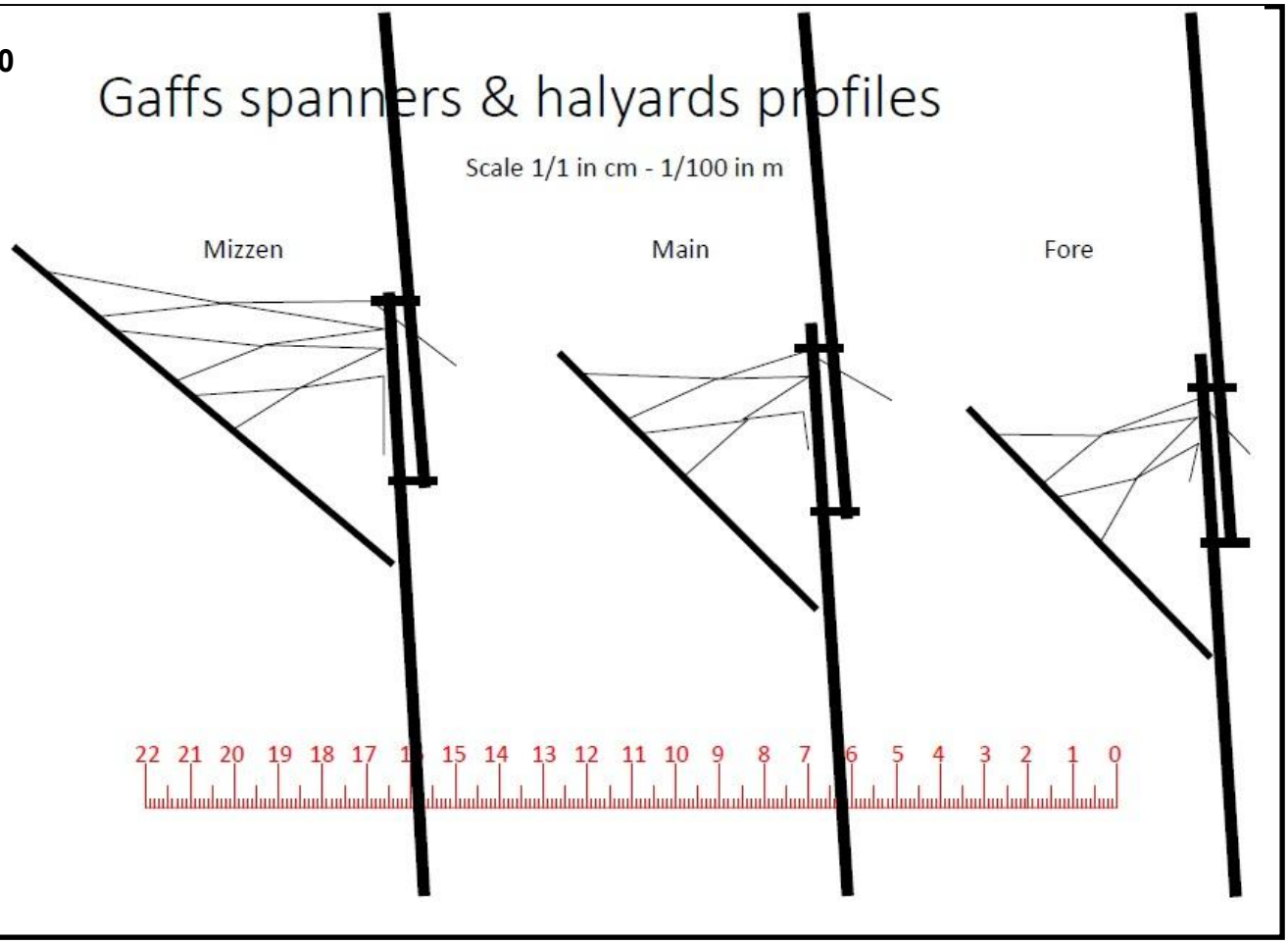
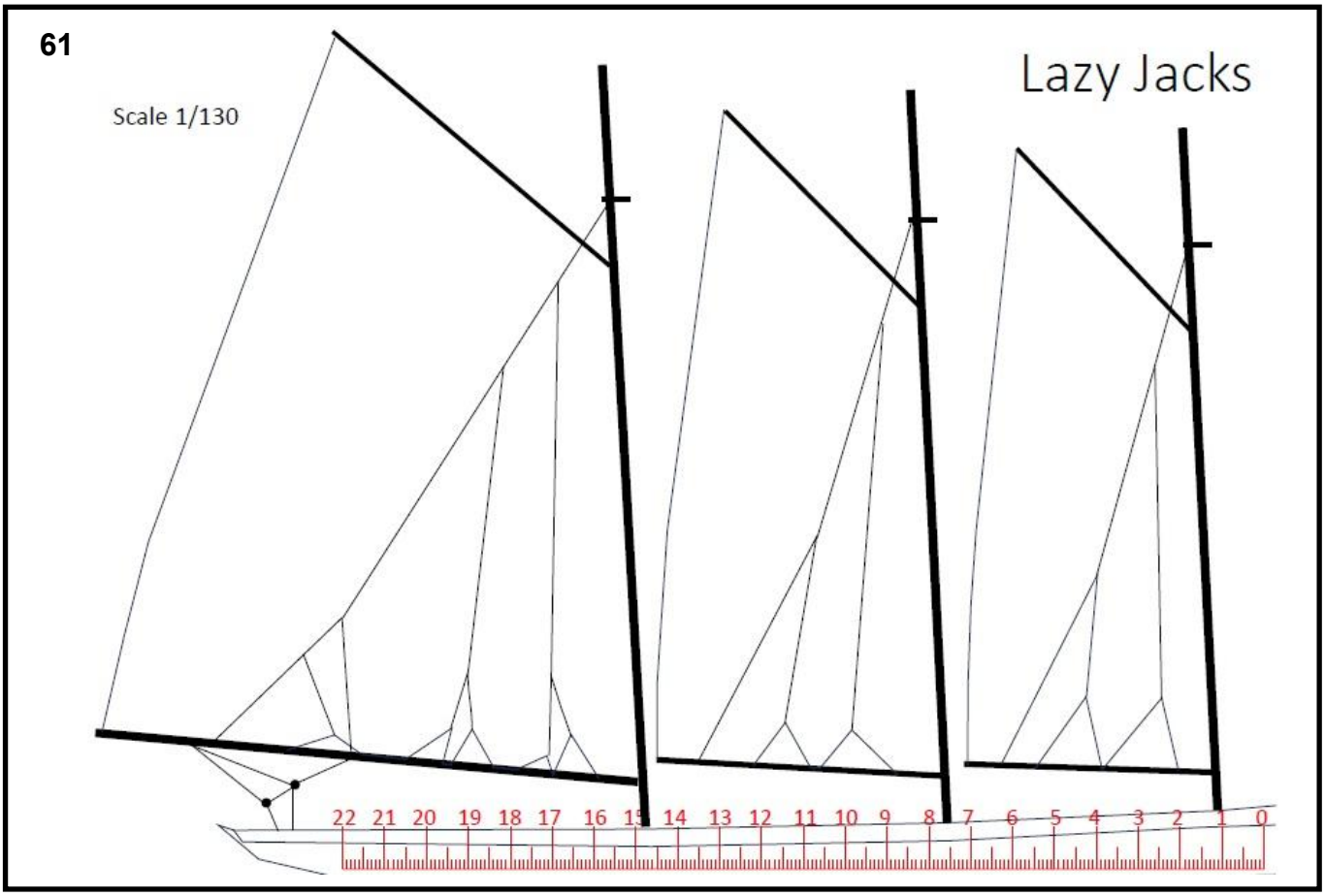


61



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cont. from p. 23

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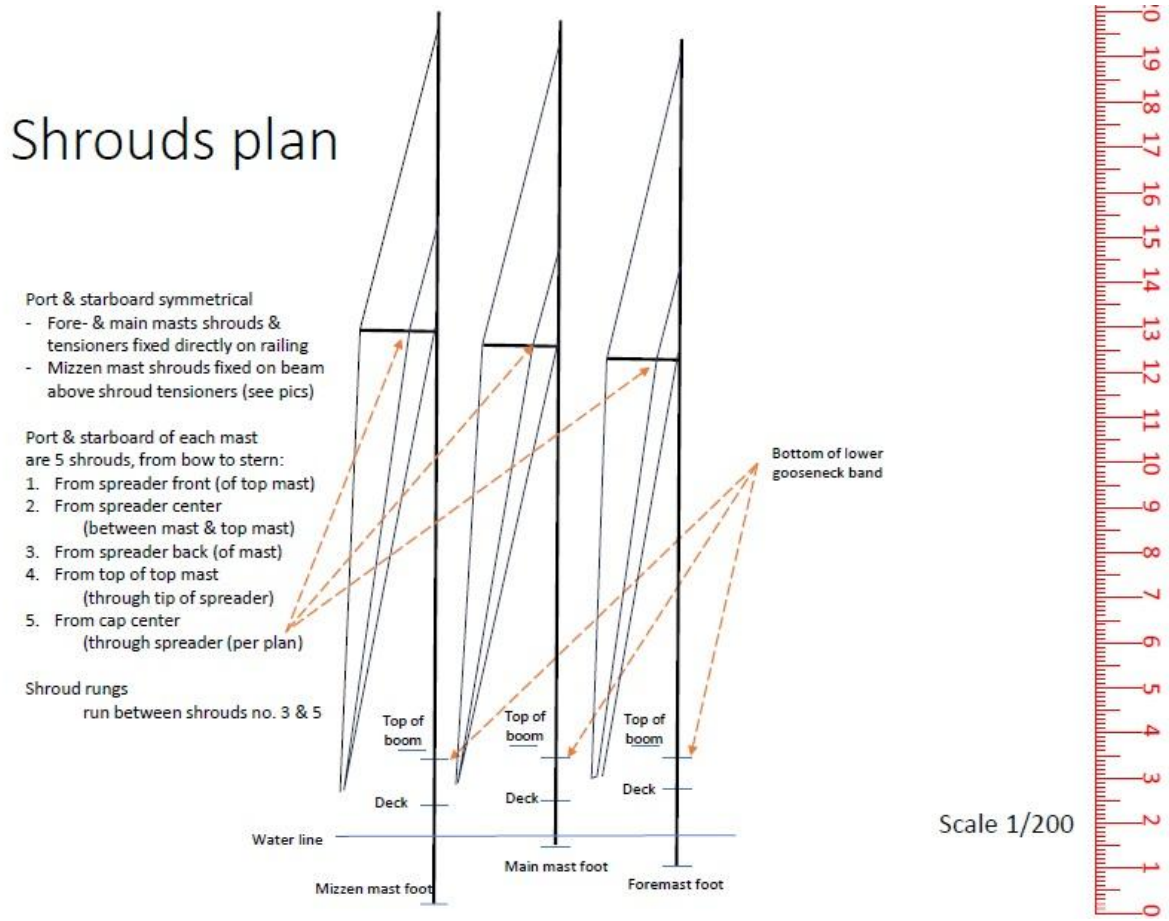
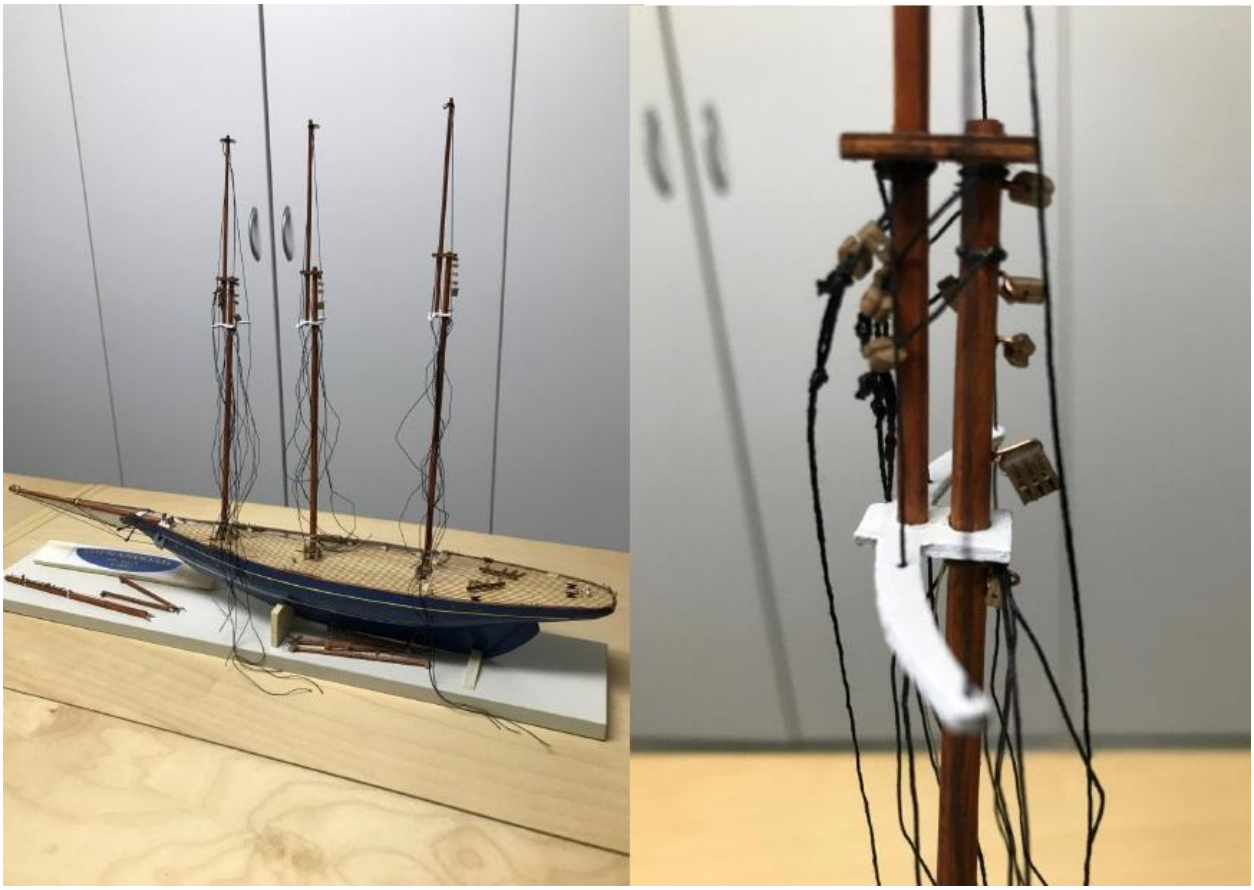


63



cont. p. 25

cont. from p. 24

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cont. p. 26

cont. from p. 25

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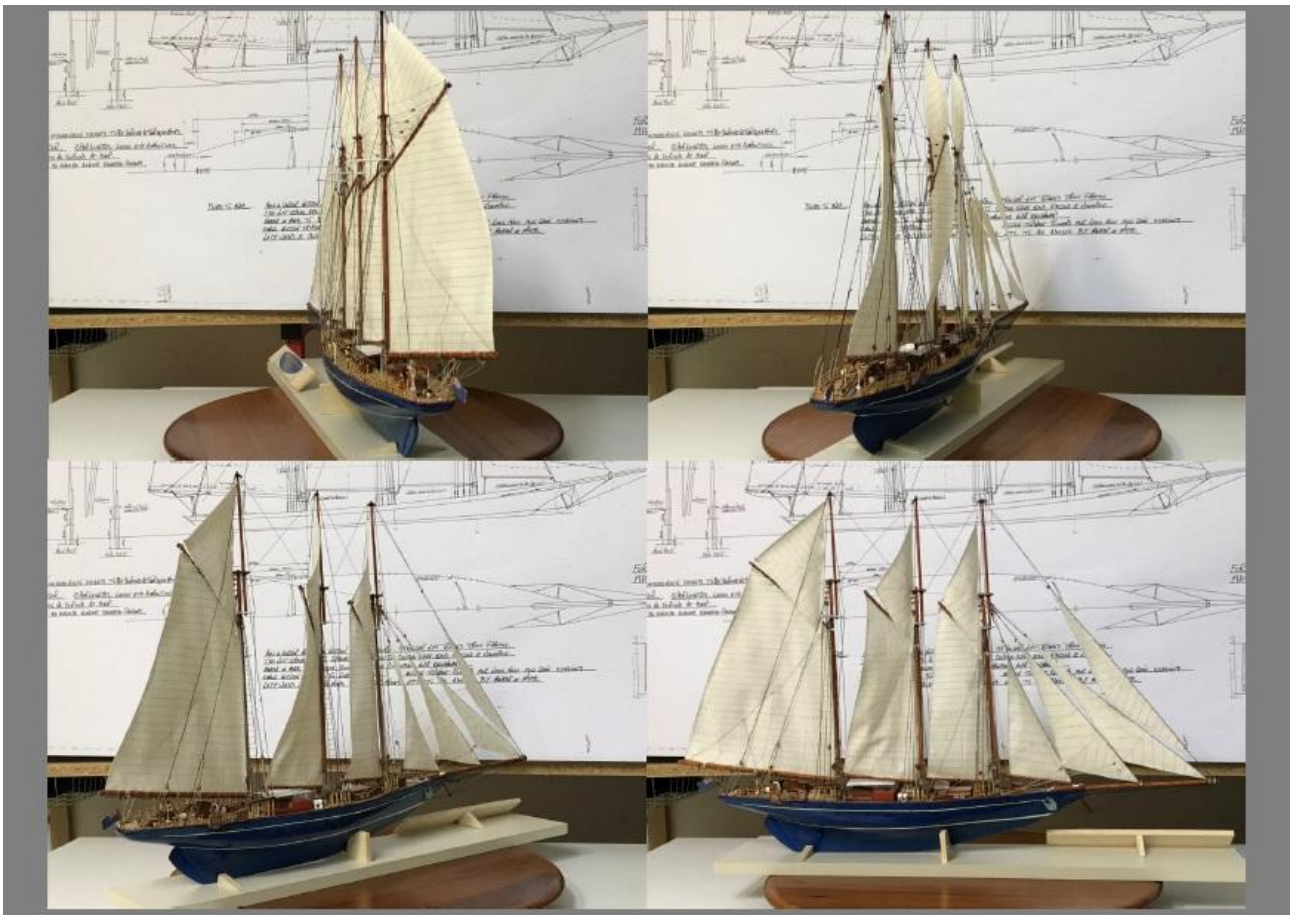

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Unexplored territory for Shenandoah:
Reflection of Lake Zurich under 35 cm of snow

cont. p. 28

cont. from p. 27

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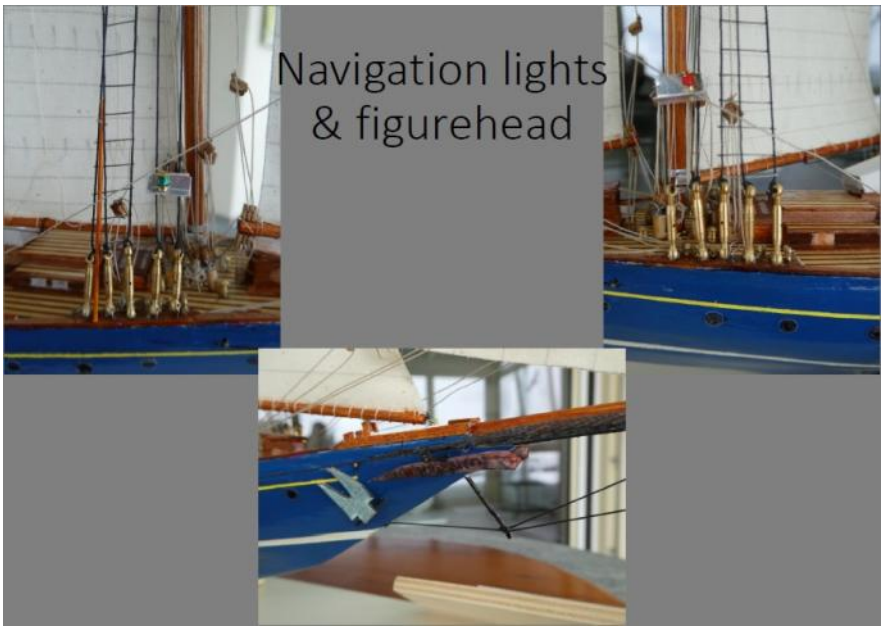

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cont. p. 29

cont. from p. 28

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cont. p. 30

cont. from p. 29

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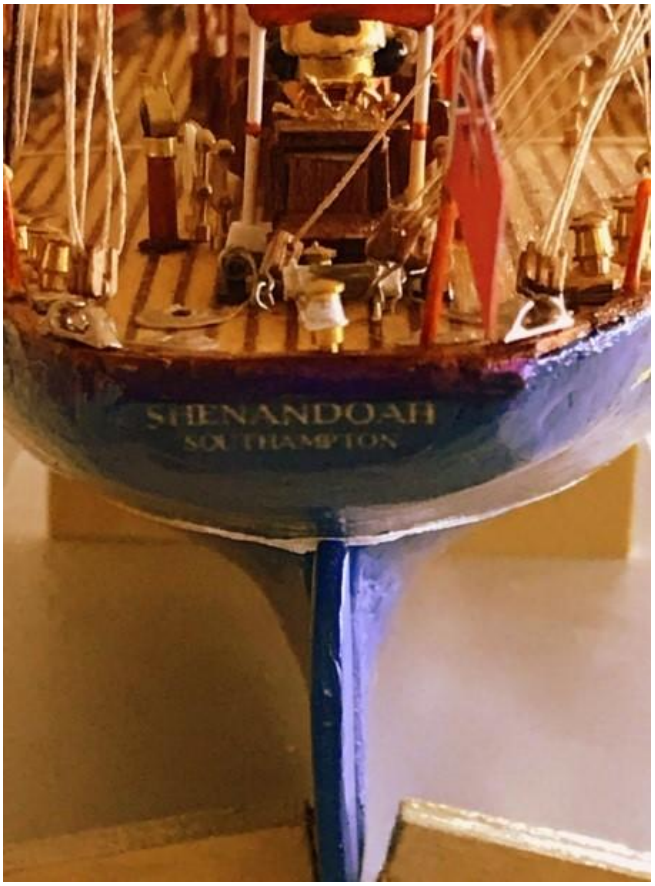

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  - Iconic yacht (25min. mostly deck tour, offers many useful views for modeling)
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