Warships to Workboats

A Joint Publication of the Modelshipwrights and Warrior Groups

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Number 1

Spring,
2005

The Whiskey Strake

At the very end of February, I was given a rare chance to spend some time in shipmodeler's heaven. Mystic Seaport, in Mystic, Connecticut (If not heaven itself, then certainly a suburb) gave a Ship Model Symposium. From 8:30 am to 3 pm, the large crowd was held spellbound by talks and slides from some of the world's foremost ship model experts. The session was led off by Lloyd McCaffery, who discussed his techniques and showed pictures of his jaw-dropping miniature carvings, both nautical and otherwise. Dana Wegner then regaled us with tales of the ship model collection of the U.S. Navy, one of the world's largest. For many of us, the highlight of the day was an intimate tour of the Seaport's 1720s vintage dockyard model of the HMS *Burford*, a 64 gun warship. Using laparoscopic equipment loaned by a local hospital, Grant Walker took us over the model in great detail, both inside and out, with illuminating comments based on his 12 years of working with the models of the Rogers Collection at the U.S. Naval Academy. Readers of the Nautical Research Journal can see similar photographs taken by Mr. Walker and Dick Bond, but there is simply no comparison with seeing the scenes projected onto a 20' screen!

As a weekend bonus, I got to spend some time with the incredible 18' long model of RMS *Titanic* built by Fine Art Models and on display at the Mystic Aquarium. Photographs alone cannot begin to do it justice, but despite that, I've added a brief photo essay on the model on page 12 of this issue. I hope it inspires you to go see the real thing!

-The Editor

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A Primer on Planking

Part one **-by David Antscherl**

I have put together a short photo-essay on planking a ship's hull. The photographs in this article are of a model of *Resolution* of 1772, one of Captain Cook's ships from his second and third voyages. The scale of the model is 1:48. You will notice that this is not a fully framed model, as it is to be fully planked except for a small window on the port side. The principles of planking a hull are the same, regardless of the framing scheme. It is, however, much easier to plank a fully framed surface.

The first stage in planking is the process of *lining out*. In full size practice this consists of dividing the hull into bands of roughly equal widths using wooden battens. In model work the use of battens is often recommended.

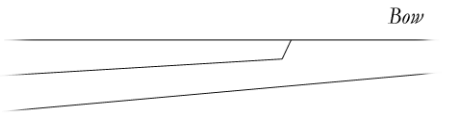
However, I find that I can visualise a smooth run much more easily by using black thread held in place by dabs of dilute white glue.

In the photograph *(page 1)* the main wale was planked first, defining the upper limit of the lower hull planking. Here the lower hull has been divided off into four bands. Each band will consist (in this case) of five strakes of planking.

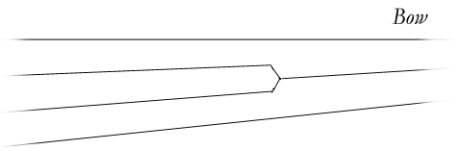
I divide the girth off into four equal widths by means of paper tick strips. This gives me an approximate 'run' of the planking. The next step is to adjust the threads until the curves of the run look right when viewed from a number of different angles.

In the case of this particular hull, which is very bluff-bowed, I will work two *drop strakes* far forward, just under the main wale. Aft, if properly arranged, there will be no need for any *steelers*. Most hulls require perhaps one drop strake forward and one aft. A drop strake is where two strakes of planking reduce to one, or three to two.

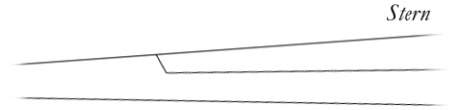
A steeler (also spelled *stealer*) is the opposite principle: here one strake is worked to become two, or two strakes widen to three. By careful planning the use of steelers aft can often be avoided.



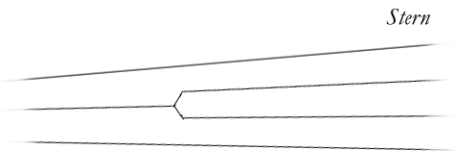
Drop strake: two to one



Drop strake: three to two



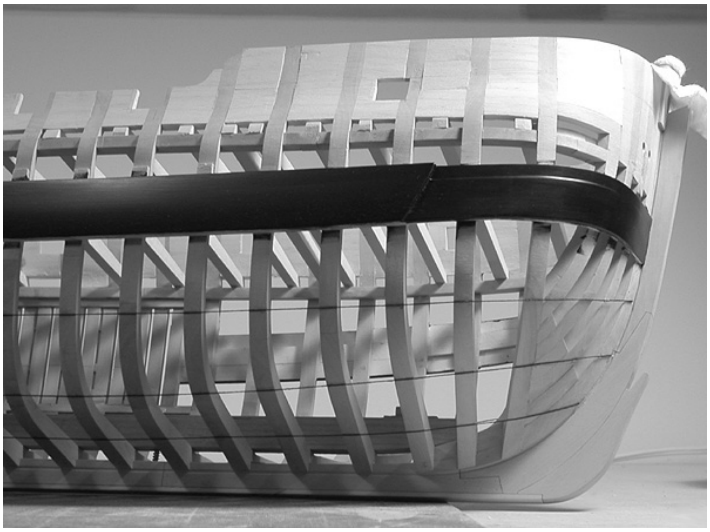
Steeler: one to two



Steeler: two to three

Note the uppermost strake under the aft end of the main wale *(previous page)*. You will need to add a small piece of plank or two to fill the trangular gap under the outer corner of the wing transom. These pieces will run parallel to the lower hull planking.

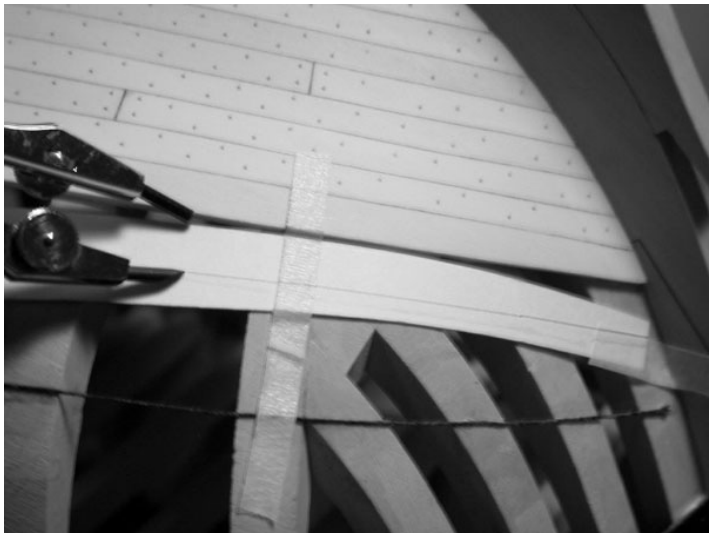
Next is another view of the hull during lining out. Some minor adjustments still need to be carried out to the threads at the bow. No strake should narrow to more than half its maximum width at the bow rabbet. The uppermost band is where the drop strakes will be worked in to avoid this problem.



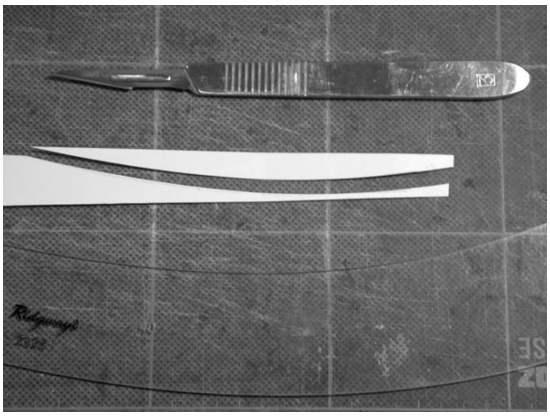
The photo below shows the first two bands, ten strakes in total, completed and treenailed. The point of this photo is to show the forward end of the first strake, the *garboard*. It should not be carried up the bow rabbet – a frequent beginners' error.

If the garboard is carried up too high, the remainder of the *hooding ends* of the planks (the ends that fit into the rabbet) will be crowded together and be too narrow, or too many drop strakes will be required forward to compensate.

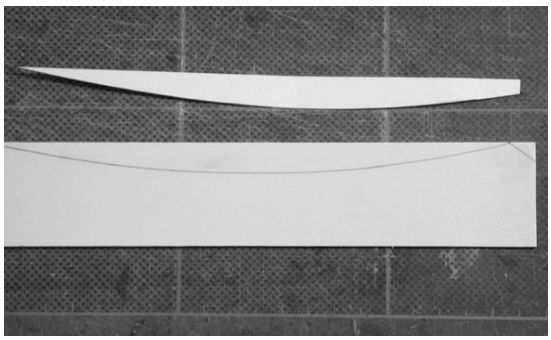
By now you will realise that virtually all the planking will need to be cut to shape, as you cannot *edge set* a plank. Edge setting means bending the plank sideways across its width. If you try to do this, one edge of the plank will lift off the frame and be impossible to attach. To avoid this happening each plank needs its own pattern. The following sequence shows the steps in *spiling off:* the process of finding its shape.



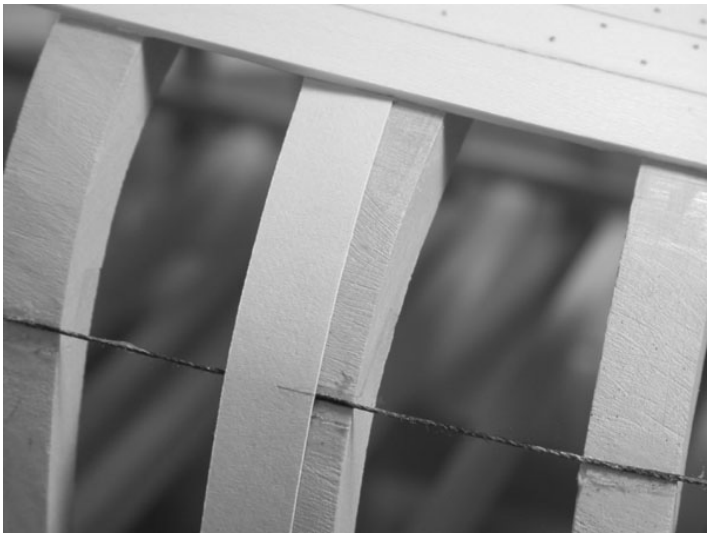
The first step is to tape a strip of stiff card along the previous strake. I use a lockable compass (left) with the point reversed in one leg, and a carefully sharpened hard lead in the other. Set the compass to a suitable opening and run the reversed point along the edge of the strake. The resulting line along the card will give the mating edge of the new plank.



Lay the card strip flat on a cutting surface and cut along the pencil line with a very sharp blade. You can do this free-hand, or – very carefully! – use an appropriate ships' curve as a guide.



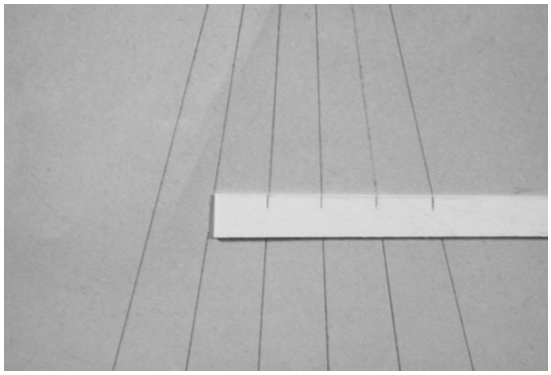
You can now use the cut card pattern to transfer the shape of the edge of the new plank to a piece of thicknessed wood stock *(lower part of photo above)*. This accurately defines one edge of the new plank.



The next step is to find the width of this plank at different points along its length.

Take a new tick strip and place it as shown above. Mark the distance from the previous strake to the thread of the planking band that you are working on. Now place this strip on a piece of paper with equally spaced radiating lines *(below)*. In the example pictured here the first strake of five in that band is complete, therefore the remaining space will be occupied by *four* more strakes. Slide the tick strip until the end and mark align with four spaces, and mark them off as shown here.

Replace the strip on the frame, and you can see how the four strakes yet to be hung will fill the planking band:



To be continued...

The Original James Bliss Ship Model Kit Shop

Memories of my first ship model

-By Art Herrick

Thirteen year old Arthur Herrick of Arlington, with his model of a WW I, US Navy, 110 ft, Submarine Chaser. Picture Credit: Boston Daily Globe - Staff Photographer – 7 February 1942

My mother, Annie Low (Lufkin) Herrick, being the genealogist of her seagoing Gloucester, Massachusetts family, had influenced my interest in the sea and involvement in shipmodeling by the early age of eleven years. She was an aquaintance of Miss Marion L. Decrow, the owner and manager of Boston's ship chandlery, James Bliss & Co., Inc.. Since 1832 this firm, located on the waterfront in a two story building on State Street, had serviced commercial ships with everything from groceries to anchors. Though not a ship modeler herself, Miss Decrow took an ardent interest in the hobby. In 1939, my mother introduced her son to her.

Since 1937, in the corner of Miss Decrow's second floor office, there was a single five-foot glass display counter, containing ship model fittings and two small finished ship models. On shelves behind the counter there was a small stock of ship model kits and kit plans from Marine Model Co. and Boucher Playthings Mfg. Corp. (now BlueJacket Ship Crafters). At that time I believe it was the only place in Boston that one could buy a "quality" ship model kit. In 1939 a Boucher 1:96 kit of a 310' US Navy Destroyer, with a hull blank of kiln dried white pine bandsawed to profile, plans and a full set of fittings sold for $34.00 (or $425.00 in today's dollars). I should note: BlueJacket now sells the same kit, with a machine carved hull, for $280.00!

In 1939 at age eleven, a ship model kit was a very long way beyond my meager budget, but I did purchase my first set of ship model plans from Miss Decrow's stock for $1.00. The plans were for Boucher's 1:48 model of a 110' WW I wooden Submarine Chaser; the complete kit being $19.00, or $237.00 in today's dollars. From a custom wood mill at the foot of my street in Arlington I also bought, for $2.00, a sugar pine hull blank band-sawed to profile from my patterns. In retrospect, I think the man at the mill was indulging a young boy in his newfound hobby, and for the next six years he was my source of hull blanks. In those days I received 25 cents for shoveling snow from neighborhood houses with fifty-foot front walkways. So, the $3.00 for my Sub Chaser ship model plans and hull blank represented the work of shoveling twelve four-foot wide walkways with a total combined length of possibly 600 feet!

I had already been weaned on balsa model airplane kits obtained from the local hardware store. Scratch-building a ship model proved to be a bit more complicated. The Sub Chaser model was a leaning experience, with a number of Saturday morning trips to Boston over the next two years to visit Miss Decrow's office for advice. With the model in a box under my arm, I first took a three-quarter hour ride on the trolley car from the foot of my street in Arlington, to Harvard Square in Cambridge. There I changed to underground railway for a twenty minute ride to Boston and Tremont Station. Then it was a twenty minute walk to Miss Decrow's office. Usually Winthrop Pratt could be found there on Saturday mornings, to answer your ship model questions. Mr. Pratt was one of a very few well known professional ship model makers in the country at that time; a white haired gentleman whom a young boy stood in awe of.

We lived with my grandfather, and I was fortunate to have the use of a room on the third floor of the house for my model shop. My very supportive grandfather supplied me with some of the basic tools for my newfound ship model interest. After two years of effort, in the limited spare time of a busy young boy, the completed Sub Chaser model was again carefully packed in a cardboard box for a Saturday journey to Boston, to show it to Miss Decrow, and Mr. Pratt.

After observing my efforts, Miss Decrow gave a thirteen-year-old boy's ship modeling confidence a real boost by saying; "Lets me call the Boston Daily Globe and get a photographer down here." The following Wednesday there was the picture of me with my Sub Chaser model in the paper's 11th of February 1942 edition. As you can see by the accompanying picture, I still have the original 7x8 glossy photo that the photographer was nice enough to send me, along with the original newspaper clipping.

In 1949, after I had completed a WW II enlistment in the US Army's 11th Airborne Division, my boyhood interest in ship modeling resulted in my spending the next 15 years employed, first as an apprentice modelmaker and then in management, by an industrial and exhibit model company, Atkins & Merrill Inc. of Sudbury, Massachusetts.

I then went on to other positions in engineering and manufacturing, and raised a family, but over the years I maintained an active interest in what was going on in the ship model world. Since retiring in 1989, maritime research and ship models have fully occupied my time as an avocation.

Arthur R. Herrick Jr., Westmoreland, NH, USA
Location: 42° 57' 47.4" N — 72° 26' 18.9" W — Altitude: 465 ft.

Resistance Soldering on the Cheap

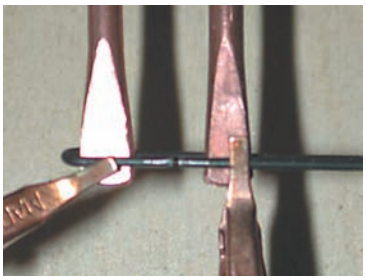
-by Terry Lynock

The cost of full blown resistance soldering setups (even the lower end of the market) made the purchase of one a bit too expensive. Considering the amount of work it would actually do, and the fact that it would probably spend most of its life on the shelf collecting dust, I decided to look around at alternatives.

I had one of the cheap, larger soldering guns which uses a transformer to heat the folded copper tip by the resistance method. I experimented with a couple of thick cables and a carbon rod. The cables offered the main resistance to current flow instead of the work piece, so this soon fell by the wayside.

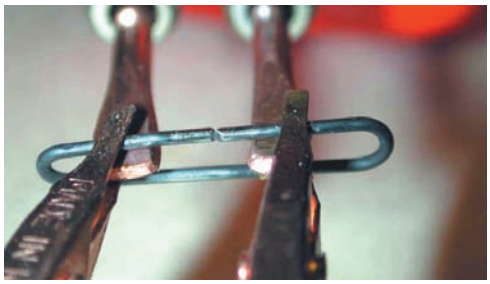
Next I tried short, 1/8" thick copper rods, inserted into the two clamps which originally held the soldering tip. These rods were bashed flat on the ends to offer a place for two small clamps to be applied, in order to make good contact between the work piece and the blades.

Electrical resistance is a strange thing and, like water, seems to take the shortest route. I clamped a prepared chainplate link to the two blades with the joint between them.



While the joint was unsoldered, the current had to take the long way 'round, but as soon as I bridged the gap of the joint with solder it took that route instead, and the solder heated up and melted.

Having proved this point to myself, I prepared another link, making sure the joint area was nice and clean and applied a tiny spot of soldering flux to each side of the joint. I switched on the iron and then placed the end of the solder wire in the gap.



In two seconds I had a beautiful little joint and with no effort at all. If a little too much solder is applied it can always be filed off before blacking up the metal.

Preparation, as always, is the secret to a clean soldered joint. To make a link, just bend the ends through 180 degrees, and where they overlap at about the centre of the link, cut both ends together. This will give you the basic link. You will need to file the cut ends to leave a fine gap and align them for soldering. Clean the ends well with a wire brush, then clamp them to the soldering iron blades.

I found this method much quicker and cleaner than just using a normal soldering iron. It worked well for me, and hope it does for others who want to try it.

Terry Lynock, Shropshire, UK

Warships to Workboats

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www.modelshipwrights.net
www.warriorgroup.org

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Building a Ropewalk

-by Phil Krol

Many model builders who have reached the rigging stage on their models wish they had better cordage. Most have heard that a contraption called a ropewalk makes model rope, but have no idea where to begin. Let me assure you from my own experience that if you can build a ship model to the rigging stage, you can build a ropewalk. The obvious advantage of using one is that you can lay up (twist) high quality rope in all the necessary diameters to fully rig the model. While some ropewalks are very complex and require advanced machining skills, my approach keeps it as simple as possible without sacrificing functionality. A ropewalk consists of three components:

1) The *whorls* (gears) that twist the individual strands.

2) The *topper*, a cone-shaped bobbin with three grooves, that holds the strands.

3) A spinning *looper* that keeps up with the twist as the rope is formed.

As the strands twist, torsion builds up until they want to knot or break. The three strands come together at the narrow end of the topper and with the aid of the looper begin to spin in the opposite direction to relieve this stress and form the rope. During the rope making process, the topper moves toward the whorls as if it were motorized.

Traditional rope is made in three different styles.

1) Hawser laid has three strands with a right-hand twist.

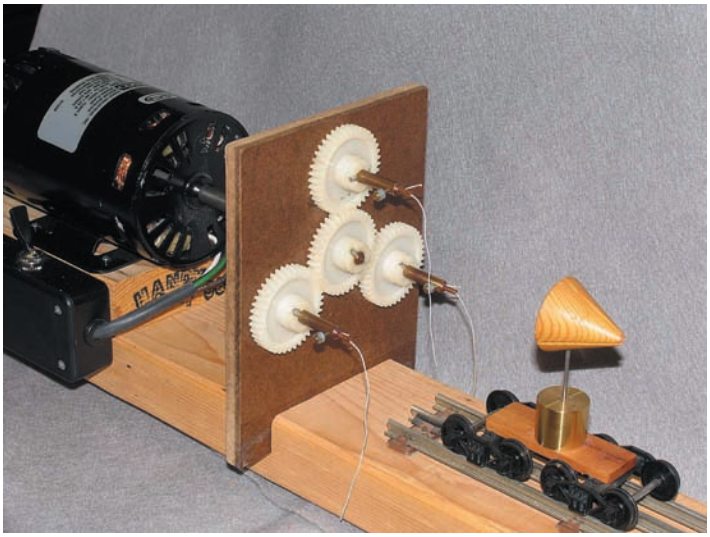
2) Cable laid has three lengths of hawser laid (nine strands) with a left-hand twist. This is sometimes referred to as two stage rope as you first make hawser laid and use that as feed stock for cable laid. These large ropes are used for anchor cable, lower stays, and sometimes the shrouds.

3) Shroud laid has four strands with a right-hand twist around a center core called a *goke*. Laying up this type requires a fourth whorl. In my opinion, it's difficult to see the difference between shroud and hawser laid rope, and the fourth strand with a goke adds complexity making the rope making process more difficult. It simply isn't worth the effort.

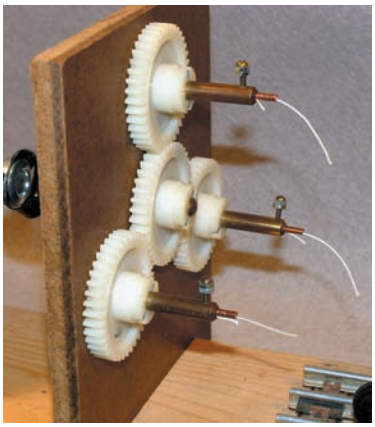
THE COMPONENTS

The whorls are nothing more than a set of four gears that simultaneously twist the strands. The center or drive gear turns three gears spaced equidistantly around it. Their size and pitch aren't important, since the gear train is built around the gears you find. I found 1 5/8" diameter nylon gears with a bronze bushing in a surplus store for 50 cents each.

I laid out the gears on a rectangle of 3/8" tempered Masonite® 5" x 6½" drilled four holes to press fit bronze bushings with ¼" inside diameter. The gears were pinned to ¼" brass shafts that slid into the bushings and were held in place by collars locked with setscrews. These are available in the parts bins of most hardware stores. The center drive gear shaft extends 2" beyond the collar so it can be connected to a motor (see Fig 7).

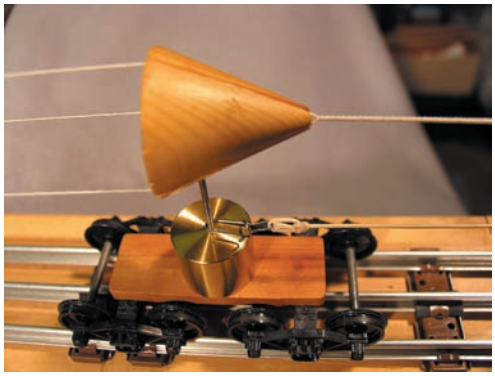


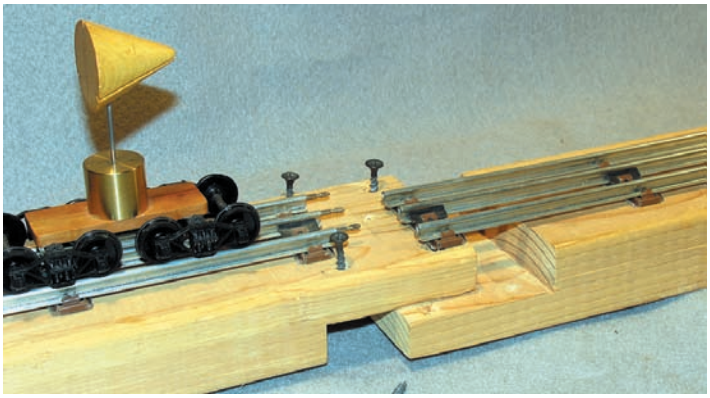
To attach and hold the strands to the whorls, I first counter bored the shafts on the three twist gears to take a 1/16" copper tube ¾" in length. Next, I drilled and tapped 3 holes for a 2-56 thumbscrew to hold the tubes in the shaft holes.



The topper is a cone-shaped piece of wood 1½" long by 1¼" in diameter with three grooves to hold the strands spaced equidistance. The point is hollowed out a little to allow space for the rope to form. These dimensions are not critical and variants of this shape will perform equally well. The topper is mounted on a rod which is inserted into a ¾" x ¾" piece of brass rod to give the assembly some heft. This was mounted on a 7/8" x 2 ¾" x 1/8" wood platform which was mounted on a pair of O gauge railroad trucks to make a facsimile of a flatcar with a topper on it. The sprung trucks were purchased as a pair for $3.50.

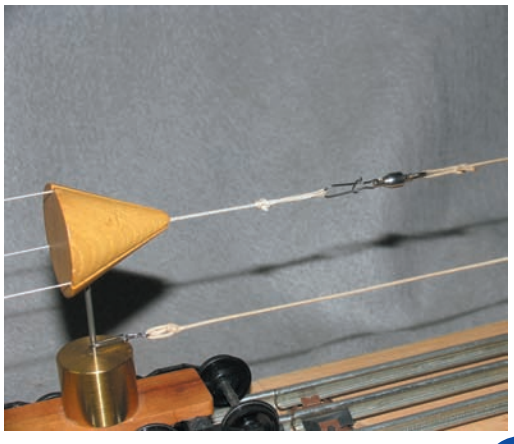
The flatcar topper assembly travels on O gauge track which is mounted on a 2" x 4". Mine is 10' long and half lapped at a track joint so it can be taken apart to facilitate storage. The 10' length produces finished rope about 7' long. I have yet to encounter a rigging situation where the 7' length was inadequate. However, you can make the bed longer or shorter, as you wish.



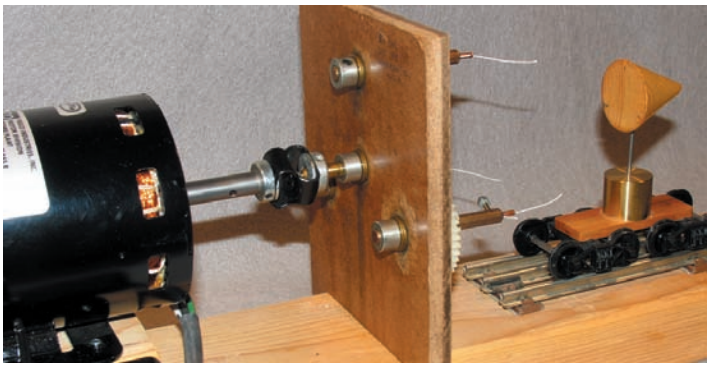


The looper is the spinning device the three strands are attached to facing the narrow end of the topper. Some advocate the use of a reversible motor to assist this process. However, I prefer using a quality ball-bearing fishing swivel for the looper. This is a simple yet effective approach. As rope begins to form at the tip of the topper, the looper starts spinning and the topper starts moving on the track towards the whorls. You just stand there and watch it work with little to no help from you.

A variable counter weight should be used to tension the strands and the forming rope. The weight is attached to a cord on the end of the swivel and extends over the end of the bed to the floor. A pulley or sheave or even a smooth groove on the end for the cord to ride in is helpful. The amount of weight varies from ¼ oz. for small rope to 1½ oz. for heavier rope. As the rope forms, the strands get shorter, pulling the weight off the floor to about one third the length of the bed. A counter-weight attached to the flatcar to create some resistance to its travel is also needed. This varies from nothing, for very small rope, to about ½ oz. for heavier rope. Since this weight travels the entire length of the bed, a gaff was installed to compensate for the shorter distance to the floor. This works by placing the cord in a sheave at the base of the gaff, running it over a sheave at the extended end of the gaff and down to the floor. The flatcar travels along the bed pulling the weight, and when it reaches the top of the gaff, you stop the motor and transfer the weight cord from the tip to the base of the gaff and restart the motor.



The gear train is mounted on the track bed in a dado cut for a press fit at the head of the track. The motor is mounted on an extension of the track bed past the gear train and connected to the drive gear shaft with a universal joint.



THE MOTOR

My initial drive motor was a 3/8" reversible drill mounted to the track bed with a couple of wedges and a web clamp. A functional universal joint was made with a piece of ¼" inside diameter heavy wall plastic tubing. One end was secured to the drive gear shaft with a small hose clamp. A dowel was inserted in the other end for the drill chuck to grasp. This functioned quite well for years and

finally failed in the middle of a ropewalk demonstration at a club meeting. In the process of repairing this failure, I found a motor that could be wired with a reverse switch, and installed a universal joint purchased from the catalog of Small Parts, Inc. The use of a rheostat to control motor speed is recommended. For heavy rope, the whorls should spin at a slow speed and for finer rope a much faster speed.

GENERAL OPERATION

Strands of feed stock material, cut to the length of the track bed, are attached to the whorls. To "load" the ropewalk, I insert a strand in the end of the copper tube, slip it into the shaft hole, and tighten the thumbscrew on each of the three shafts. Some may prefer using hooks on the whorls to attach the strands. These are carried to the end of the track bed and each strand is pulled tight to create equal tension on all three and tied into a knot. This is now attached to the looper (fishing swivel) and the counter weight placed on the floor. Equal tension on the strands is important so good quality rope will start forming with no waste. Unequal tension will cause defective rope to form for several inches or until the tension is automatically equalized on the strands. Problems with twisting can usually be reversed. If too much counter weight is used, the twisting can cause knotting or doubling up. The motor is reversed to untwist saving the setup. Practice and experimentation will quickly enhance operator skills allowing the production of high quality model rope.

FEED STOCK MATERIALS

Virtually any thread can be twisted into rope; however, some are more suitable than others. The thread should be smooth and free of fuzz. Linen, cotton, polyester, silk and fly tying threads all make nice rope. Once you become addicted to rope making, you look at thread wherever you may see it for the potential it may have on your ropewalk. You never know what the outcome will be until you try it.

There are many thread shops catering to bobbin lace makers that can be found on the Internet. These shops carry a variety of threads in a full range of sizes. DMC® and Anchor® are two brands of Egyptian cotton tatting threads that are made in a range of 10 sizes starting with number 10 through 100 which is the thinnest. Three strands of 100 will lay up into rope measuring .020" in diameter which is 1" rope in 1:48 scale. Threads are sized by number and number of plies. A thread sized 80/2 has two plies and an 80/3 will have 3 plies and be a little heavier. However, there is no standard in the industry so threads with the same number can vary by manufacturer.

The above picture shows coils of finished rope in various diameters. The second coil from left in the top row is cable laid, and stained It was twisted in two stages. The smallest coil measures .010". Two balls of DMC® thread in size 10 and 100 are shown. The other two are 80/2 and 100/3 threads. All of these are available from bobbin lace vendors on the internet. Some local needle point shops may have some of these threads. The coils at bottom right are futtock shrouds with seized hooks in thimbles, stained with Jacobean MinWax®.

HARDENING

When the rope is finished twisting, hardening is a process that sets the lay and removes any stresses remaining in the twist. This can be accomplished by giving additional twists at the looper end and then stretching the whole length. You will find the swivel will spin some more, and when this is repeated and all the spin is exhausted, the rope is hardened and will not unravel when removed from the setup.

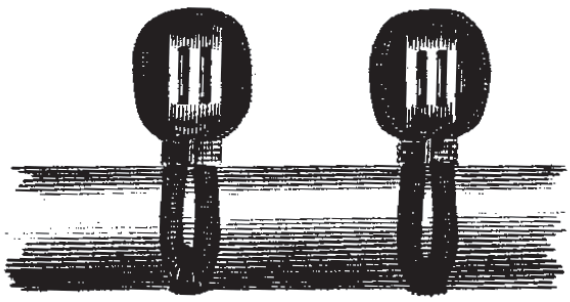
CONCLUSION

Twisting your own rope is a gratifying experience and allows you to produce whatever diameter is called for in the rigging tables. Most rigging books have reference tables listing the block and rope size for virtually every line on a ship by tonnage and/or rating. Rope circumference is almost always used and must be converted to diameter for our purposes (circumference divided by Pi or C/3.1416 = diameter). The easiest way to measure your rope is to take a dowel and mark it with a ruler to show ¼ inch and ½ inch. Wind your finished rope within these marks and count the turns, thus ½ inch or .5 divided by 26 turns = .019". This method is actually more accurate than using a micrometer as there is no compression of the fibers between the anvils. It is good practice to measure everything you produce and document the thread and counter weights used to produce it. When you need more of that particular size, you can produce it without experimenting. Incrementing the number of strands using the same size thread will expand your possibilities. You can go to six, nine and twelve or more strands to vary the size. Once you gain some experience, you will be able to determine just about what it will take to produce a given size rope minimizing the number of runs to achieve your objective.

Finally, coloring your rope can be done with various dyes or stain. I use Minwax® stain. Jacobean is good for standing rigging as it resembles Stockholm tar. Fruitwood, by itself or mixed with a little colonial maple, is good for running rigging. I wind a coil around my fingers, grasp with a forceps and dip in the can of stain for a moment. Then blot with a cloth and hang to dry. Treating the rope with beeswax makes it more stable and supple.

I hope you have found this article and accompanying photographs helpful in getting you on your way to making your own cordage. Perhaps you will be motivated to tinker some more and develop a continuous feed mechanism and take up spool so a large quantity can be made on a single run. Should you be interested in the history of rope making, a good place to start is Chatham Dockyard in England. Go to http://www.thedockyard.co.uk.

Phil Krol, Wheaton, IL, USA



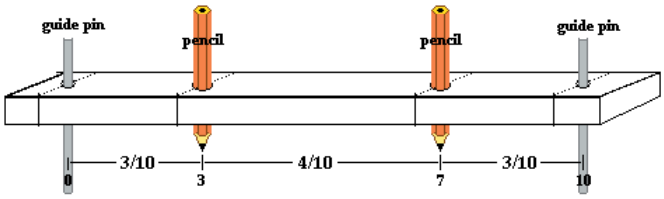
Shortcut to an Octagon

-by David Hill

The mechanics for eight-siding a mast blank are well known to mast builders, though few go through the mathematical deduction (see "Math for an Octagon", Richard Palmer, NRJ Vol 49 No 4, pg 250) – they simply use a mast-scribing jig passed down by their forefathers. Here I describe a simple device that will scribe the parting lines on a mast blank at the desired 3-4-3 proportions; it works on stock of any width, straight or tapered, without measurement or straightedges or rulers...

Prepare your mast blank as square-sided stock. The blank may be tapered or straight, square or rectangular, as needed to encompass any taper and round or oval section.

Prepare a scribing jig, using 3-4-3 proportions, as illustrated. Use a piece of wood somewhat longer than the largest dimension of your mast blank, drilled to take a guide pin at each extremity, and a pencil at $^{3}/_{10}$ of its



length from each end.

Place the jig atop the mast blank, angled so that the guide pins rest against the sides of the blank, and the pencil tips are in contact with the face so they will draw on the surface.

Slide the jig along the blank to draw the lines, keeping the guide pins firmly in contact with the sides (the crossing angle will increase as the mast taper diminishes.) The lines will be drawn at the precise 3-4-3 proportions along the entire length, automatically adjusting for change in width.

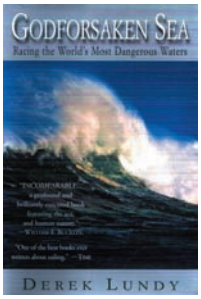
Flip the blank and repeat on each of the other faces

Plane off the corners, up to the scribed lines, to 8-side the piece.

With care, the 8-sided piece can be 16-sided by drawing parting lines on each of the 8 faces. Carefully adjust the guide pin height so you can run the guide pins along the 8 corners with the pencil tips in contact with the face.

David Hill, Franklin, MA, USA

Book Review



Godforsaken Sea
Derek Lundy
Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books,1998
ISBN 1-56512-229-1

A friend of mine and I used to own a sailboat, a 32 foot Hunter. You know, we just couldn't wait until Friday afternoon when we would cruise up to the lake with our respective dates *du jour* for a weekend of sailing. Cooking steaks out in the middle of the lake, nice wine and good music; well, it made for some very enticing weekends. And what rogues we were 20 years ago. Ignoring the wind advisories, grabbing a case of beer, braving the 4' whitecaps and 30 mph winds for an afternoon of fighting the elements…

Morey Benton sent me a book recently, titled *The Godforsaken Sea,* written by a fellow by the name of Derek Lundy. Looking at the cover, I was wondering why he had sent this particular title to me. We've never discussed the old sailing adventures of bp, nor have I shown any interest in yacht racing. Pretty cool cover, though says I. So it went to the bookshelf to get picked up at a later date.

Well, as luck would have it, I finished reading the James Bond books late one Saturday night, and as the bookstores were closed, I picked it up just to read the prologue. Friends, 3 hours later I was still at it, being hooked by one of the most well written 'thrillers' that I ever had the joy of reading.

I know this book has been mentioned before, but please indulge me a tad to give you my impressions of this little gem; the impressions of somebody whose aquatic life consists of lake sailing and the occasional salt-water fishing trip, but never so far out where I couldn't see the comfy features of land. And quite frankly, while I've read about the ancient mariners' fights to beat around Cape Horn, until the first mention of it on this list, the recent accomplishment of Ellen MacArthur and now *Godforsaken Sea*, I never really heard of the Southern Ocean before. Thanks to the wonderful narrative of the book, not only have I heard of the Southern Ocean, but for a couple of weeks I was there, I was in it, I was wondering what in the world I was doing there (in the comfort of my recliner) and was wondering what in the world were these people thinking… Mr. Lundy put the Southern Ocean in a perspective that even a landlocked South Texan can understand when he points out early that "The Southern Ocean contains that point on earth that is farthest from any land. It's about 1,660 miles equidistant from Pitcairn Island… and Cape Dart on Antarctica… Only a few astronauts have ever been farther from land than a person on a vessel at that position… It's too far away for even long-range aircraft to get to – assuming they want to return to land…" Well folks, it was that passage that hooked me. The one about the astronauts. I mean, they were in *SPACE,* man. They have to use life support systems and stuff.

This is the story about the 1996-1997 Vendee Globe race, the seemingly insane around-the-world race performed by a single person, with no assistance and no allowances to stop at ports for refitting, either for mechanical or store purposes, on a monohulled craft built strictly for speed. The racers leave Les Sables d'Olonne, go around Antarctica, back up by Cape Horn and return. Something like 107 days. By yourself. No assistance. Something breaks, you fix it. On the sea. Did I mention by yourself?

This is a biography, of sorts, of the 16 participants and the race director. It's also a history, of sorts, of the single handed sailors who provided the inspiration for those that followed. And finally it's a geography lesson, of sorts, explaining in explicit detail the Southern Ocean: winds blowing constantly above 50 mph; waves 40-60 feet in height; irregular wave patterns.

Above all though, it's a book about courage and will and perseverance. There is one passage in the book which describes one of the participants, Isabelle Autissier (yeah, guys, a girl, one of the two participants of the race who were of the "fairer sex") having to climb her 80 foot mast to replace 2 broken halyards, in 50 foot seas. (Now if you're like me and can't quite get a minds eye picture of a 50 foot wave, well the next time you see a 5 story office building just imagine it being water and coming at you. Now to take this little analogy one step further, just imagine you being on top of an 8 story office building but without the building, only on a pole with the 5 story office building coming at you…) One of the most moving passages I've ever read was Chapter 8 where Mr. Lundy describes the saving of two racers who were capsized, and their fellow racer who saved one of them.

I don't think I'm that different than any of you. I mean life's gonna happen and when it does, for the most part, it doesn't happen the way we've planned it. Fact is, my experience is that when life happens, well, it downright sucks. And during those times, we all look for some type of inspiration to get us through these trying times. Me, well, I'll go down to The Alamo for a couple of hours or remember the Spartans at Thermopylae or watch "We Were Soldiers" or "High Noon" or take out and read a couple of well worn passages from Scripture. And now I've got another source of inspiration with this book. Like, ok, bp, you think you got problems? You are now capsized, 1200 miles from help, in freezing water, by yourself. Fix it.

Bob Payne, San Antonio, Texas, USA

Bits & Pieces

Ever have a great idea for a modeling tool? Ever create a subassembly that you're justifiably proud of? Well, here's your chance for fame. Send us a paragraph and a picture or two, and we'll post them here. Everyone has an *"Aha!"* moment from time to time, and this column will highlight several of them in each issue. Send your **Bits & Pieces** to Tom Babbin at babbint@comcast.net.

Clothespins revisited

Open the clip

I have just finished reading the Fall 2004 issue of *Warships to Workboats* and Tom Babbin's clothespin article caught my eye. I am planning to try out the doll house size pins, but have a trick of my own to submit. When I first began building I too used clothespins but found them to be a little weak in the amount of 'squeeze' they offered. With a little intuition and luck I forced the clothespins apart and reassembled them in reverse. This reversal offered more 'squeeze' and a narrower clamp point. I also found that by adjusting the placement of the spring you can adjust the amount of 'squeeze,' which I suppose is simple physics. I have attached a few photos to demonstrate the different solutions.

Re-assemble backwards

Scott Bower, Worcester, MA, USA
www.shingebis.org/boats

Flip the spring

Voilà, superclips!

Oars

The lengths of the three pairs of oars for my model of the *Nordlandsbåt, Dagny* vary between 10½ and 11 feet; in my 1:16 scale the longest is 8¼". As I've made model oars before as well has having rowed since boyhood, I was struck by the difference between these Norwegian oars and those I was familiar with. Their blades are of a constant thickness, and the looms have a constant fore and aft dimension throughout their length. The looms narrow from the handle ends, but they retain their maximum thickness to where they begin to meet the blades. Then, where the loom meets the blade its cross-section is an oval, saving weight and providing some streamlining.

To model the blades I first laminated two strips of ½" wide by 2mm thick basswood to make blanks. Gluing two pieces together ensures straightness, and the glue-line defines the plane of symmetry. It is well to strive for grain symmetry too in matching up the faces to be glued together. If each strip was cut from what originally had an 'a' and a 'b' side, glue 'a's to 'a's or 'b's to 'b's.

On the blanks I drew matching centerlines on the two faces and then drew around a wooden pattern to mark the oars' shapes. With the Preac saw set to cut to the depth of the blade's surface, I made a series of cuts across the blank's blade ends about ¼" apart on both sides. The cuts would guide the carving to the blade's final thickness later. Before any carving, while the outlines were still visible between the saw cuts, the shapes were cut out on the scroll saw. After the blades were carved, I eight-sided the looms with a small plane and rounded them by using a shard of window glass as a scraper.

Mat Leupold, Wayland, MA, USA

A Titanic Model

Fine Art Models of Royal Oak, Michigan has crafted a magnificent 1:48 replica of the White Star liner *Titanic*. The 18' model is currently on display at the Mystic Aquarium in Mystic, Connecticut as part of an exhibit titled *Return to Titanic.*

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1 Lifeboat #2.
2 The forward part of the port-side boat deck, under funnel #1.
3 The three cylinders of the steam whistle
4 The aft end of the 1st class promenade deck
5 The forecastle, looking aft to the bridge.
6 The boat deck, a great place to watch for icebergs or re-arrange furniture.
7 The poop deck, including the auxiliary bridge.

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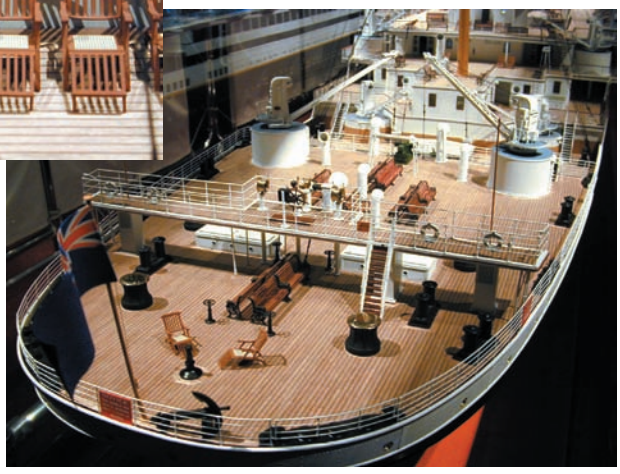

Model by
Fine Art Models

Displayed by
Mystic Aquarium

Photos by
Tom Babbin