First GRP boat from Orkney factory

THE FIRST glass reinforced plastic fishing boat designed and built in Scotland ran trials at Scapa Flow last week.

She is the £10,500 *Hildona*, built for William Rendall of St. Mary's. In Orkney for the trials was *Fishing News* Scottish Editor, Alex Dempster, who was highly impressed with the craft and her performance.

Hildona is a unique blend of old and new skills. The hull is GRP, moulded in the year-old factory of Halmatic (Scotland) Ltd., at Hatston, near Kirkwall, while the superstructure has been built and the machinery fitted by the long-established family yard of Duncans of Burray, which specialises in traditional, clinker-built Orkney craft.

Hildona — from the names of Skipper Rendall's daughters Hilda (6) and Rona (8) — is a beautifully modelled craft built primarily for lobster fishing around the Orkney Islands. Designed on the James Duncan and Sons standard 36 ft. traditional clinker model, her dimensions are 36 ft. 1½ in. in length, 12 ft. 6 in. in breadth, with a draught of 4 ft.

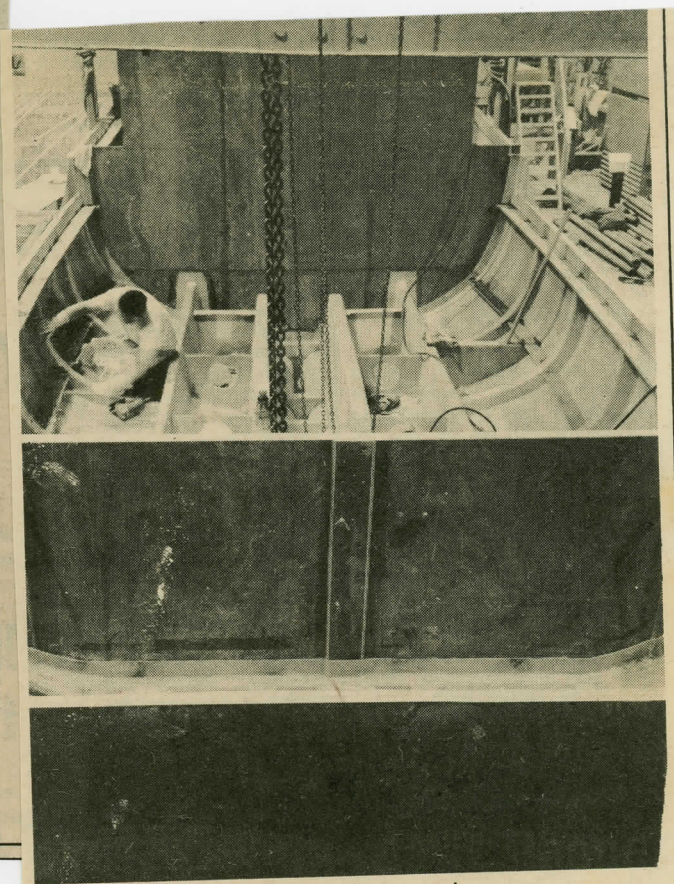
Her wheelhouse is well forward giving plenty of working space aft. Fuel tanks for 135 gallons are built into the hull and the main engine is a Lister HRW6MGR marine diesel developing 88.5 hp at 2,000 rpm. A hydraulic pot hauler, manufactured by MacKay and MacLeod of Evanston, Ross-shire, is fitted on the starboard side amidships.

Spacious

Although only 36 ft. long, *Hildona* is fitted with a Sailor 76D/66TS radio telephone, a Simrad 160 echo sounder and even a Decca radar. The spacious wheelhouse has a small Calor Gas cooking stove, while off the wheelhouse into the forward peak is a small cabin with berths for the two-man crew.

The hydraulic steering system has a second remote steering wheel which is used while the lobster pots are being hauled. This is sited low down outside the wheelhouse on the starboard side amidships. The engine control is just inside the wheelhouse door.

Amidships, on the starboard side, a steel plate prevents the lobster pots damaging the hull while they are being hauled. This plate can be renewed if it gets damaged.



Inside the temperature-controlled Orkney factory of Halmatic (Scotland) Ltd. Left is a completed mould and workmen prepare another (right).

Normally *Hildona* would have cost £8,500, but various special equipment added another £2,000 to her cost.

A spokesman for the Highlands and Islands Development Board, which helped Halmatic settle in Orkney and assisted the Duncan family to expand their yard, said: "The *Hildona* is the first of a new line of fishing vessels and signifies the beginning of a new era for the Orkney boatbuilding industry, for many years renowned for sturdy, seakindly boats.

"New materials have been introduced to the industry and craftsmen in traditional boatbuilding methods have shown themselves willing to adapt to the new techniques involved. At the same time the quality of traditional design has been recognised by the construction of this first, all-Scottish GRP vessel to Orcadian lines."

However, Mr. Pierce Webb, the Halmatic yard's

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Internal structure of a 36 ft fishing vessel.

GRP boat-cont.

32-year-old manager, recognises it is going to be a hard job to "sell" the idea of plastic boats to fishermen who are understandably selective about the craft they sail. But, with the commissioning of *Hildona* and the interest she has already generated, Mr. Webb is confident the breakthrough will come.

As the new craft was on her trials, a second Halmatic hull was being hauled up at Duncan's boatyard to begin fitting out in the berth vacated by *Hildona*.

In saying that this year would be critical for his firm at Orkney, Mr. Webb was nevertheless hopeful that he would achieve a turnover of around £100,000 this year. Their aim is to make hulls for boats 36 ft., 50 ft., and 54 ft. long.

After the *Hildona*'s trial trip, a party of journalists were shown over the Halmatic firm's premises at Hatston where they saw how moulds for the hulls are made.

The trip to Orkney was arranged for the Press by the Highlands and Islands Development Board, while British European Airways provided travelling facilities.