A MARRIAGE BETWEEN OLD AND NEW

BRITAIN'S FIRST GLASSFIBRE FISHING BOAT LAUNCHED

THE FIRST GLASSFIBRE boat in Britain designed and constructed specifically for commercial fishing was launched in Burray last week.

The 36-ft. HILDONA, made by Halmatic (Scotland) Limited at Hatston and fitted out by Duncan Boatyard, Burray, has been officially handed over to Mr William Rendall of Schoolhouse, Holm, her owner. She is a general purpose boat suitable for fishing lobster, white fish and scallops. The Hildona is named after Mr and Mrs Rendall's two daughters Hilda and Rhona. She will operate in Orkney waters and will be kept in Weddell Sound, on the north side of Burray.

The Hildona is the first glass reinforced plastic boat to be produced by Halmatic since they opened their Hatston factory in May last year. A second 36-ft. Halmatic GPR hull has already gone to Duncans for similar fitting out.

The Hildona was delivered to Duncans last November. The century-old boatyard put in the 88 h.p. Lister diesel engine, a two-bunk cabin, wheelhouse, the hydraulic steering and all the modern navigational aids. She has also a hydraulic lobster pot hauler. Her extra fittings including a compressor for skin diving operations bring the total cost to nearly £11,000.

The design was based on an original Duncan wooden 36-ft. vessel which has won a high reputation as a sea boat in the hazardous waters around these islands.

It took in this instance six weeks to mould the hull and two months to complete the boat in Burray. Duncans however were held up waiting for the delivery of the engine and the windows (which have special alloy frames and toughened glass).

Future boats, it is hoped will be produced complete at 2½ monthly intervals.

The launching of this first GRP fishing boat produced in Orkney was a very happy moment for both Halmatic and Duncans. This prototype is the culmination of months of work by Mr Pierce Webb and his ten men in the £25,000 Hatston factory and by Mr James Duncan, his two sons, and the four men at the yard in Water Sound, Burray.

Thirty-three-years-old William Rendall, the owner of the Hildona, began work as an apprentice joiner but his love of the sea led him to Leith and the Dolphin Sea Training School and then the deep sea. Later he returned to Orkney to fish lobster in a 25-ft. boat and was very successful. He went into successful partnership with his brothers using a bigger vessel but later sold his share and emigrated with his wife and family to New Zealand.

Homesickness eventually brought the family back to Orkney and Mr Rendall has been fishing in hired vessels waiting the completion of his new boat.

He will fish with 22-year-old Tom Fotheringhame, who comes from Stronsay. They started yesterday.

By the end of next month, Halmatic hope to have a total work force of 22. Already moulding work is in progress on the first 54-ft. trawler hull, which will actually in this case be used as a motor cruiser by her American buyer.

Mr Pierce Webb of Halmatic (Scotland) Limited told *The Orcadian* this week:

54-FT. HULLS

"We plan four 54-ft. hulls and one 50-ft. hull as well as a total of eight 36-ft. hulls for this year. If we achieve our programme for 1972 we should exceed a turnover of £100,000 this year."

All Orkney boatyards will share in the fitting out of these GRP hulls. Duncans of Burray are the first to do the job for the first two 36-ft. GRP boats but similar orders will also go to Anderson's and Mackay's in Stromness.

To mark the occasion of the first-ever Orkney-produced GRP boat, representatives of the National Press as well as the main fishing journals were invited by the H.I.D.B. for a two-day visit to Orkney. They arrived by air on Tuesday and were entertained to lunch in the Ayre Hotel by Halmatic before they went to Burray to see the new boat and visit Duncan's yard. Later, they visited the Halmatic Factory at Hatston.



The 36-ft. HILDONA, the first glassfibre boat in Britain specifically built for fishing, is launched at Water Sound, Burray. [Picture: Phoenix Photos]

Present as well as the Press were Mr Rendall, skipper of the Hildona, Mr Jas. Duncan and his two sons, Mr Pierce Webb of Halmatic, and representatives of the H.I.D.B. who were all congratulated by Mr Marwick on the production of the new boat.

The following day the Press contingent visited Mackay's and Anderson's in Stromness.

A PERFECT "MARRIAGE"

The joint Halmatic-Duncan effort has been rightly described as "a straight case of marriage between old and new."

The principals who have been involved in this first 'marriage' are: Halmatic — (Original work force who started training at Havant in November, 1970):— Colin Eunson, Alistair MacLeod and James Scott, all of Kirkwall; Denis Leonard, Sandwick; George Rosie and Leonard Scott, both from South Ronaldsay; Fred Linklater, Rendall, Maurice Robertson, Evie; John Miller, Stromness, and James Tait, St Ola. Recent employees completing the final stages of training have been William Louttit and George Woodward, both from Kirkwall; William Brown, Rendall, and John Sinclair, Stenness. Andrew Newlands joined the company from Edinburgh.

The foreman is Mr Geoffrey Davies, from Southampton.

Duncan Boatyard's team were Mr James Duncan (67), his two sons Robin (37) and James Anthony (33), and Ian Bruce, Sinclair Chapman, both of Burray, and Eric Gutcher and Bruce Currie, both from South Ronaldsay.

DREAM COMES TRUE

In charge of Halmatic (Scotland) Ltd. at Hatston is Mr Pierce Webb, who belongs to Ipswich, Suffolk. He served seven years apprenticeship with a firm of naval architects involved in the design of small boats of 100 feet. He joined the Havant company in 1964 as a designer and was production manager before coming up to Orkney to take over the factory.

His wife Clara was born in Kirkwall, her mother Mrs Bird being an Orcadian and her father belonging to Essex.

Mr and Mrs Webb came for a holiday to Orkney in 1968. As a designer he was obviously very interested in fishing boats and he came to the conclusion that Orkney offered the sort of facilities for the manufacture of glassfibre fishing boats. He sold the idea to his directors and with the help of Mr Robert Strachan, former Orkney Development Officer, after 18 months of patient negotiations he was able to see his dream come true.

Mr and Mrs Webb live in Kirkwall and have two daughters, one aged six and the other two. "As a family we are well entrenched in Orkney and its way of life," says Mr Webb.

For well over a hundred years

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there has been a James Duncan as the head of the Burray boatyard — six generations passing on their knowledge from father to son. The first James Duncan sited his boat building shed on the shore at Water Sound and the firm has remained there ever since, occupying today a new 80 ft. by 50 ft. shed. Since the war close on 350 boats of all kinds have been completed in the yard. In recent years they have concentrated on the 36-ft. lobster boats. Last year they produced five of these and a 30-ft. shrimp trawler for Cumberland.

While fitting out the Hildona they worked also on two traditional 36-ft. lobster boats, one of these for John Clarke, a Sanday fisherman, and the other for Roderick, Hector and Neil Stewart, South Uist fishermen.

The firm has already received delivery of a second 36-ft. GRP boat from Halmatic — this boat is intended for another Orkney fisherman, Mr J. Mitchell, Hatston.

Negotiations are in progress with all three Orkney yards for the fitting out of a further six GRP 36-footers.

STROMNESS YARDS

J. T. Anderson situated at the Point of Ness, at the entrance to Stromness Harbour, is at present the largest yard in the seven Highland counties. Now employing 30 men, it was the first to produce a boat under the Highland Board's Fisheries Development Scheme. This was the Kildinguie, a 50-ft. stern trawler which cost about £45,000 to build for its Stronsay owners, John Dennison and his son, Magnus.

Anderson boats were first constructed by the present James Anderson's grandfather in the 1890's.

But it was his father who seven years ago after operating a small yard within the town took the business out to the Point of Ness where it has seen considerable expansion. Mr Anderson, Senr. died last September.

The yard is at present building a 55-ft. seine net trawler for Mr John Mackay and others, Kinlochbervie, Sutherland. On the stocks also are two 36-ft. prawn trawlers, one for Portessie in Banffshire, the other for Alistair Finlayson of Lochcarron.

They are also rebuilding the lobster boat Northern Isle which sank off Start Point, Sanday, on November 15 last and was later salved.

It is hoped in the near future to build a 58-ft. ring netter and provisions are being made for a 36-ft. and a 54-ft. glassfibre boat. To accommodate Halmatic hulls side slipping facilities are to be increased.

The biggest boat the yard has tackled so far was the 55-ft. Diana which went to Stornoway. "But we can cope with anything up to 75 feet," says 24-year-old James Anderson.

Mackay's Boatyard situated at the Pierhead, Stromness, is now owned by 28-year-old Arthur Sinclair, who took over the business seven years ago.

The firm is over a hundred years old and the yard is housed in a shed measuring 100 ft. by 40 ft.

Mr Sinclair has a force of six on his pay roll. They are all Orcadians—

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