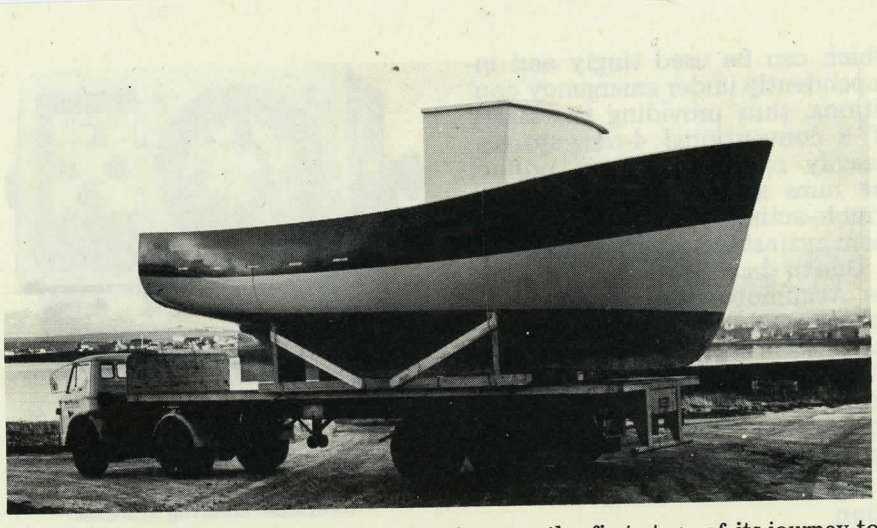


A Halmatic deep-drafted 36-ft hull is seen here on the first stage of its journey to Iceland where it will be completed by a local boatyard. Halmatic hope to secure further orders for several of their grp classes from nordic countries in the future.

Experience so far in the UK has been limited to a handful of vessels. The 50-ft *Harvest Gold* from Shetland has stood up well to the test of time and the Whitby-based 54-footer *George Weatherill* has also given a notable performance.

At Fleetwood five 36-ft grp stern trawlers have been operating together for some time and the results have been promising. Other 36-ft boats from Halmatic or Tyler have been in operation as well as the first three from the Cornish-based Cygnus Marine concern.

In many instances these 36-ft hulls have been ordered by skippers who previously operated wooden boats in the 40/50-ft class. Consequently many have compared the performance of these to these larger class boats. This is, of course, not a proper comparison, the grp boats in this class being only 36-ft which is below the 40-ft mark classification, above which commercial fishing vessels are usually regarded. Apart from the liners and shellfish boats that have been traditionally built of wood there are few trawlers in this size classification with which these grp boats can be compared. Fishermen are thus often comparing the performance of these to wooden vessels of a greater size and displacement to give a false comparison.

The one drawback to grp vessels - if one can refer to it as such - has been the lightness of the material compared to wood. This makes little difference to how the vessel sits in the water and tows in the smaller size groups but it becomes more noticeable as the size of vessel increases. It is also less noticeable on vessels engaged in operations other than trawling.

None of the grp boats presently operating in the UK from the main moulders has experienced any drawbacks here but some grp boats built abroad in the past year or two in the 80-ft (24.3m) class have suffered from this problem.

With the upsurge once again in the development of our coastal fleets enquiries are quite strong for further units from the main grp moulders and overseas orders are beginning to trickle in.

The most successful grp firm, Halmatic (Scotland) of Orkney have now delivered 38 of their mark 2 version 36-ft hulls, together with 10 of their 28-ft hulls. Two Halmatic boats are now operating in Ireland and the firm have delivered their first 36-footer to Iceland for completion locally. Halmatic have been putting considerable work into the export market during the UK lull in building and have sales agents in France, Sweden, Denmark and Norway. Specialised designs have been developed for Denmark and Norway and a stern trawler version will soon be touring France.

A Tyler 36-ft hull will be fitted out in the UK for Iceland while Cygnus Marine have received orders for their fourth and fifth deliveries to Sweden.

In the absence of any notable demand at the present time for hulls larger than the 36-ft class it is this design that is attracting the greatest interest from inshore fishermen, especially those used to light trawling as well as perhaps shellfish operations. Prices quoted for this size of vessel, fitted out and completed with an engine in the 100hp class and with an adequate trawl winch, vary from £30,000 to £35,000.

Given the ability to put in a substantial time working during the year and with the fish prices now available many more fishermen are convinced that this class of vessel is a viable operating unit. Less sophisticated boats down to 21-ft in size are available for those fishermen not operating full-time and these are being seen in increasing numbers in particular areas of the coast, notably the southerly coastal areas of England.



On left, recently completed by James McCaughey of Wick is a Mark I Halmatic vessel for the island of St. Helena.