Shetland's first-ever reinforced plastic boat

and's first GRP fish-
sel was recently given
ortunity to show her-
in front of a group
eries correspondents
our of the north of
d. The previous day
ad visited the factory
the new boat was
t Kirkwall. The visit
ganised by the High-
and Islands Develop-
Board. The boat, built
matic at their Hatson
is the largest GRP
vessel at present in
with Britain's in-
fleet. Fifty feet over-
d costing just under
) the boat is fitted
that she can work
eine and trawl. The
t Gold has been in
nd since her delivery
rch this year.

Harvest Gold is
owned by Winston
and Stuart William-
d is based at Lerwick.

Both have skippers' tickets which they took under the tuition of Jeanette Williamson at Whalsay. Winston Watt is the skipper of the new boat and it was his father Robbie Watt who advised them to go for the GRP boat. What was required was a boat as large as possible but which could fish inside the three mile limit, and which would also keep the ever increasing costs of maintenance and repair down to the absolute minimum. The former meant an overall length of under fifty feet and the latter suggested the GRP (glass reinforced plastic) form of construction. The boat which best fitted these requirements was the fifty foot boat built by Halmatic and designed by G. L. Watson of Glasgow.

For her fifty foot length the Harvest Gold is a very large boat with a beam over three feet greater than wooden boats of the same size overall length. The area of deck space is enormous, and it is this and the dual purpose Mastro hydraulic winch which gives her the seine trawl capability. Other deck gear includes a Beccles coiler and a Carron power block. The engine is a 180 h.p. Kelvin which can push the boat along with remarkably little noise or vibration, at about 9½ knots. The large engine was chosen for better long term economy since the large engine will not be driven as hard or require as much maintenance as the smaller size. Unlike many GRP vessels the Harvest Gold has decks and superstructure of GRP, many boats having wooden decks and wheelhouse. This means that the boat will not require the usual refit or painting of the wooden vessel. The whole boat has been built to keep the ever increasing costs of maintenance to a minimum.

The boat has a greater number of electronic gadgets in the wheelhouse, including an Atlas echo sounder, Kelvin Hughes radar and Decca navigator. One interesting piece of equipment is the framework on which all the gear such as gallows, hoists, power block and even the mizzen masts are mounted. This was designed for Mr Watt by Norman Moncrieff who is foreman at the Malakoff. The gear is arranged in this way in order to minimise any strains on the wheelhouse.

The builders of the boat, Halmatic, were up till a few years ago involved only in the yacht building market but then decided to go into the fishing side of the market. They based this operation at Kirkwall in order to be where the greatest demand for this type of boat exists, which is in the Scottish inshore fleet. They have completed a number of the 36-foot boats and are now producing a second version of it; one of their larger boats is at present being completed at a yard in England. At present the firm employs twenty at the Hatston yard but over the last year have had problems in that their staff having been trained in England, have been leaving to earn perhaps one or two pounds a week more elsewhere. Mr Pearce Webb, the manager at Kirkwall, thinks the prospects are good with a number of orders coming in.

The Harvest Gold was fitted out by the Orkney firm of boatbuilders, Andersons of Stromness. They have finished a number of the 36-foot boats and do the job to the standards expected by the professional buyer.

One Shetlander who was involved in building the Harvest Gold was Mr Bobby Hunter from Burra Isle. As second in command at Hatston his job is as deputy to the manager. Mr Hunter thinks the GRP form of construction is a very impersonal thing and that a wooden hull will always have more character. He believes, however, that the advantages of GRP will in future win the new type of construction increasing favour in the fishing industry. With ever increasing prices of timber and the low maintenance of GRP this may well be true. The hulls built by Halmatic are enormously strong and rigid due to the thickness of the hull and the one-piece construction. The motion of the Harvest Gold at sea is similar to that of a much larger boat and the skipper and crew are all well pleased with her.



ston Watt, Stuart Williamson, Bill Wylie, Jim Williamson, and Peter Dinardo the crew members of the Harvest Gold. [Photo: Dennis Coutts