

RAVENSCAR.

By Nige Dale.

A SAILING MODEL OF A YORKSHIRE COBLE.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF FRANK, OF NYLET SAILS.

RESEARCH PRIOR TO THE BUILD.

The Yorkshire Coble for centuries was the mainstay of the fishing industry from the coast of Yorkshire. A vessel noted to be stable when under sail, compatible for beach launching, with a traceable history dating back to the Vikings. According to a local boat builder, all Cobles are built to the requirements of the customer, so all thoughts of a sheer plan from which to build a model, were removed with immediate effect.

Although the basic shape determined the vessel as a Coble, how it was trimmed was down to the use of the vessel required by the owner. Some of the larger Cobles were built with a “Cuddy”, a bolt hole for the crew. But today (2012), there is perhaps, only one of this type remaining at sea, she is the Three Brothers, owned and run by the Three Brothers Trust. This vessel has a Cuddy at the front offering some shelter for the crew, but very cramped. Cobles used bags of shingle as ballast, which were moved to the weather bilge when the vessel needed trimming when under sail. Also this

ballast could be jettisoned in compensation of carrying a large catch.

As mentioned before, Cobles were built to the requirements of the customers' use, so inherent variances are always apparent. The obvious difference to a layman is the length of these vessels, as in "look that one is bigger than that one", yes it probably is but that is to the requirement of the owner/ user. Cobles built with a length of up to and about 24 foot/ 7300mm were referred to as "Salmon" Cobles, Cobles used in long-lining were 26-28 feet/ 7900-8500mm long, but unfortunately I have not been able to find a colloquial name for these. Whilst the longer Cobles of 35-40 feet/ 10600-12200mm long, with a decked cuddy were known as "Ploshers". There is a reference (found in my research) to "large, sharp-sterned cobles", called "Mules", built for Herring drifting, And some with a short mizzen mast, but information is limited.

The variance in length, use, rig, and local name used, are some of the areas of variance of this type of vessel. Add into the mix, the boat builder, and the requirements of the owner/ user, makes this vessel even more fascinating as a topic of research. The boats of the British Isles have evolved over the centuries to what we have today, and as a product of evolution some are no longer in use or there records are lost in the mists of time of their local histories. The Coble is supposed to have a Viking origin, which is not surprising due to its area of use, but what Viking vessel is it derived from? It has no resemblance to a Drakkar or Knarr in its hull form, too big for a Faering, but other boats from the Viking age, for example, the Trekeiping, Firkeiping, and Femkeiping could be the distant ancestor. The Faering, is a boat with two pairs of

oars, Trekeiping three pairs, Firkeiping four pairs, and Femkeiping five pairs, all similar vessels but getting larger to accommodate the rowing capacity, any one of which could have fathered the evolution of the Coble. Most or all of the Viking vessels mentioned here could be termed as double ended with no definitive bow or stern, and at some point in an evolution to the Coble, one of these vessels lost one end to become a transom, driven from the necessity of what it was used for, where it was used and the materials available to build them.

From a very early age, and from our schooling, recognise a Viking vessel as having a square sail on a single mast. Sometimes on smaller Viking boats these square sails are rigged in line with the keel opposed to the beam, making them a lug type of sail. A sail rigged in line with the keel (fore and aft) is easier handle as a sail and propulsion medium rather than the square or rectangular shape of the historic sail. The evolution of the square sail into the quadrilateral shape we recognise today as a lug sail, happened, to try and indicate when would be futile. The fore and aft rig of the Coble started to become popular in the mid fifteen hundreds as an introduction from Holland, and was used on a multitude of other fishing vessels of these Isles for another four hundred years.

The name Coble, is over a thousand years old with differing pronunciations. In Northumberland, it is pronounced with a long "o", Co-ble, whilst in Yorkshire, it is pronounced with a short "o" ,Cobble. There is a belief that the name is derived from the Celtic Ceubal, and it is not surprising that a similar vessel is found in Breton, and called a Caubal.

Cobles are still in use in Yorkshire, although the majority are motor powered, and continue to supply a valuable quota of landings. The Staithes area alone in Yorkshire, supply approximately 1/6th of the UK requirement of Lobster, and that is not from large modern fishing trawlers, but from the motorised versions of the Sailing Coble. There are a few still in sail, but are generally open boats with no deck, or cuddy, if the information the Three Brothers Trust have, is correct.

BUILDING THE SAILING MODEL.

This is a story of the building a model Coble, to sail as a scale radio controlled boat. There are no plans for this vessel so building this model was not going to be an easy venture.

Getting photographs of existing vessels is relatively easy, when you are in Yorkshire, but living in Worcestershire, limits your access to samples, so a holiday to Whitby was organised. Whitby is a lovely place to visit, and happily my wife enjoys the area as well, so off we went. Whitby is not the only busy place for boats, Yorkshire has a wealth of them, and a visitor is spoilt for the choice of harbour and the boats that reside within those harbours.

Fig 1, Northumberland Coble in Bridlington Harbour.



The harbours are not the only source of samples or information about boats, and so it is the local museums that are a very important part of any research into the boats of an area. It is advised that you do not just walk through the museum and view the exhibits, but ask the people of the museum for information or clarification, you will be surprised at the amount of help you can get from the initial question you ask.

Fig 2.



Fig 2, shows Cobles in Bridlington Harbour, including The Three Brothers, which has a cuddy. The Three Brothers is the large white hulled Coble, with her standing rigging laid down. Taking lots of photographs is a good way of getting pictorial references for review when considering how and what you are going to build as a model. Already mentioned is that they are all different so whatever the final result is, it should be recognisable as a Yorkshire Coble.

I took a lot of photos of Cobles, but visiting The Royal Diadem on hard standing in Whitby, afforded me the opportunity to do some measuring up of the hull and ribs to get a feel of what could be practicable.

THE HULL.

The hull was going to be a challenge if built in the original way of setting the planks, and then adding the ribs, but luckily Orion Mouldings of Sunderland, offer a Coble hull in their range of fibre glass model boat hulls. The hull is 36"/916mm long and displays the planked hull of a Coble that one can only dream of, if doing it yourself. The prominent hull planking, gave the hull the sturdy look of the prototypes as seen in the photographs of the previous pages. So now consider the development from desire to design.

The model will have to have a sail servo, and a servo for the rudder. A place for the radio receiver, and battery pack, the model is to have a cuddy so that is where the sail servo will reside. There is a planked section on the stern of cobbles of two or three planks, if I exaggerate this feature, the rudder servo will fit under the planking. A simple box structure amidships, not a normal feature, but could be made to look relevant for nets or catch, will house the receiver and battery pack. That's the first part of the desire now to the design.

The cuddy of The Three Brother has an extra plank in the hull sheer section, which the fibre glass mould does not have, so add an extra plank to the bow section, and install a bulk head for the cuddy. The hull planking is of stout timber on the prototypes, so to emulate this within the fibre glass mould, the planking was made in small sections. Each small section has a length which is the distance between the centres of the ribs of the boat. The fitment of these small sections of timber along the plank lines did not offer a pretty joint, more of an abutment. This was covered by the stout

ribs that that are a feature of a Yorkshire Coble.

Fig 3.



Fig 3, indicates the fitting each plank in sections the same length as the distance between the centres of the ribs, then covering the joint with a rib, and using English Oak gave the model the presence of sturdiness of the originals. Keeping the Oak clean is going to be a problem, but with care, should pay dividends in the final result.

Fig 4.



Following the plank lines of the hull on the inside, gave the illusion the hull is made from continuous Oak planking. It was hoped that this idea of making the planking in small sections to look like a timber construction would work, and wasn't confirmed until the ribs were fitted.

Fig 5.



The extra strake to raise the sheer at the bow to form part of the Cuddy, runs roughly 40% of the hull length from the bow. (On the Three Brothers it is over three quarters of the boat.) The cuddy bulkhead is positioned about a quarter of the boat length from the bow, 9"/225mm on the model.

The ribs set to cover the plank section joints, were individually made to fit as would the originals. The model scale is about 1:12, the ribs were fashioned from 1/4" / 6mm timber, a bit bigger than what should have been used to replicate the 2,1/2" of the originals, but this gave more flexibility to the covering of the joints, and helped the location of hull rivets on each rib. These hull rivets were cut down hardboard pins, which were glued into place, in a predrilled hole. Three planks down from the gun'le is the deck line normally associated with the prototypes, so this was laid down with thin plywood.

Fig 6.



The photo, Fig 6, above, illustrates a square hole for the mast, and forward of this is the sail servo position. The sail arm will point down in the open section on the port side, a tight fit, but it fits, the triangular gaps to starboard are for the cables. Yet to be made are the brackets, to which the servo will be screwed. The cuddy infrastructure in place, with a full bulkhead and cross members, allows for the placement of sheaves (on posts) through which the running rigging may run. This forward section is near complete in the raw, or unfinished stage of pre-varnish, so do something else.

Fig 7.

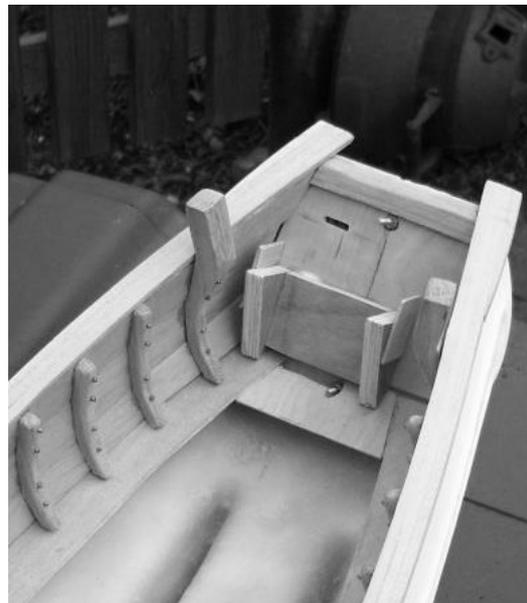


Fig 7, indicates the panelling of the transom, with the rudder servo housing installed at the same angle as the transom. Perch Eyes to hang the rudder were fitted and a slot for the rudder linkage cut through the transom. At this point in the build she is starting to take shape.

Fig 8.



The fitting of a stringer to the ribs on the inside of the boat, 1.1/2 planks up from the deck line will give support to thwarts. The deck is loose planked for access to the bilges, as is with the original, or prototype. The deck planks of the model, were made of Hemlock Pine in strip wood form, 25 x 5mm about the right size for the planking, Hemlock is a hardwood and quite light, and easy to work.

The cuddy roof, or fore deck fashioned from one piece of ply, although this will differ from the prototypes, on this model it is an access port to be removed when access to the sail servo is required. The box for the battery pack, radio receiver, and the placement of loose thwarts, finished the open deck. This only left the rudder servo area to plank over (similar to the prototype, and box in. Boxing in, using woven coffee stirring sticks, gave a rustic touch to the stern section.

A rudder was made and a tiller to fit completed the stern, all coming on, and looking well. So far.

Fig 9.



Fig 9, indicates a mock-up of the mast, and yard, and an eagerness to have a look at the progress of the build. With the big bits almost completed, the small but significant parts need attention. The running rigging, and all that is associated with it.

THE RIGGING.

To secure the bow sprit, mast, sails, there will be lines and ropes of their multitude of names, there will be cleats, chain plates, hoops, and to finish all this off will be blocks or pulleys.

The cleats are made of oak to match the hull, however, the gammon ring, hoops, chain plates and fore sail horse will be made from brass, which in some areas is frowned on, as not proper, but as I can make them, I will use brass.

The pulley cheeks are fashioned from oak, with brass sheaves, finished off with a grommet stop, lashed in with a thimble. Needing nimble fingers it is also a time consuming job, but offering an effective product.

Fig 10.



The photograph 10, offers a good view of the progression of the build, although unvarnished, she is taking on the character of the coble.

Once satisfied that all the lines will do what they are supposed to do, and can be finished off on cleats in some form of authentic manner, the model was stripped down and varnished to finish. The fore deck or the cuddy roof, was stained with walnut to offer a contrast to the other timbers of the build, all other timbers remained natural.

Fig 11.



She was very lively on the water with internal ballast, so I resorted to a fin keel, removable for display and storage.

To the purist, the fin keel ballast would be an anathema, but with internal ballast she would be too tender to sail, except in the most delicate of winds. The fin keel serves its purpose, and although it makes the model sail a little stiff, it also adds stability. This stiffness is caused by the lowering of the centre of gravity, which in turn offers greater protection against the swamping of water over the gunwale, if the model should list, heel, or tilt away from the wind in a sudden motion.

Fig 12.



Fig 12, illustrates trials for the sails, as in trying to find the best size and set for the boat. Using old pillow cases as a material for the sails, trials were undertaken to determine the best sail size and set up. The result was a selection of jibs, Lug style sails and the yards to suit, one set of which would be used on the model.

When the final format for the sails was determined, an order for the sails to be made professionally was placed with, Frank Parsons, of Nylet. Upon their arrival they were fitted and the model was complete.

Fig 15.



The progress from start to finish was not a long one in the great scheme of things. I had no desire to make a museum piece, I leave that to those are more capable than As for the next project, it hasn't turned up yet.

me. I enjoy building boats, and sailing them, or with motors as the whim may take.

