

The Biggest built Cawsand Lugger/Cutter, replicated in Millbrook by Colyn Thomas

Way back in 2008 I had the privilege to view the original drawings and researched the Biggest lugger/cutter built in Cawsand she was called the Grayhound or Greyhound because her name is spelt either way in different contemporary accounts. She was built by a celebrated builder of fast craft a Mr John. F. Parkin in 1776 to the order of John Knill a collector of Customs at St Ives, or if not he certainly acquired her soon after she was completed. She was approx 125 foot long with a width of 23.2 foot and a draft of 8 foot 6 inches and weighed 156 tons. She was scaled from the original drawing copy attached which shows her has being 73 foot 4 inches long with a width of 23 foot and a depth of hull being 8 foot 6 inches and weighing 150 tons. I do not know exactly where she was built, possibly on the Bound in Mr Jobe's boat yard, in the entrance to the bound or in the Square and would have been pulled down the slipway into the sea during high tide possibly by horses or by gravity depending on the gradient of the slipway at that time. Mr Parkin built luggers, 36ft cutters and craft of this type in various yards as well as Cawsand during this period – including some in Frank's Quarry (The site of Mashfords Yard). At that time Parkin rented the yard under lease from the Mt Edgcombe Estate from the 8th February 1779 until 19th June 1812. Because of his widely recognised reputation for building fast vessels he built for both the revenue authority, privateers and smugglers, in fact 28 vessels can be positively attributed to him such as The Batchelor, Three Brothers, The Hind, to name but a few. The drawing of Grayhound states she was definitely built in Cawsand but I do not think there is any definitive evidence, or at least I have not found any. Although it was a new class of lugger it was not something that evolved over night from the drawing board. Or from a hand carved model which had been cut down and scaled up. Parkin retired from the yard in early 1812 and the yards tenure was advertised in the West Briton on the 19th June of that year, He died in 1815 aged 82 years, and was buried in Maker Church Yard on 12th October 1815.

John Knill was Callington man born on the 1st January 1733, and served as a clerkship lawyer in Penzance and also as a magistrate; he became a collector of customs/taxes at St Ives from 1762 -1782 and was the mayor of the town in 1767 aged 34 years. In 1777 he became the Private Secretary to the Duke of Buckinghamshire. He built a three sided 50 ft high magnificent granite monument at Worvas Hill one of the highest eminences of the neighbourhood which is about one mile from St Ives. Built in 1782, it is enclosed by iron railings and surrounded by a plantation of furze and firs and erected as a landmark to those at sea smuggling goods into St Ives. On one of the sides of the pyramid is carved the word "Resurgam" in bold letters and the arms of the Knill family with their motto "Nil, desperandum" on another the text "I know that my Redeemer liveth and on the third " Johannes Knill 1782, the date of erection. Knill evidently intended to be buried here. . Gossip said that Knill himself was once a smuggler although no evidence can be found. He died at Holborn, St Andrews; London on the 29th March 1811 aged 77 after a second career at the bar.



Cawsand Bound in approx the 1880's note the lugger/bayboat on the beach to the left of the picture, ahead of this the very large lugger being built or repaired, which is sited in the entrance from the square to the bound. You can also see the boat builders shed to the right of the large lugger and the open view to Cawsand Square. The slipway can be seen to the left of the lugger/bayboat running down the beach.

Is this where the Geyhound was built ?

In 1779 Knill wrote an indenture in his most eccentric will directing a delightful ceremony be held around his granite obelisk known as Knill's Steeple every five years when hymns ancient and modern were to be sung . During which time ten virgins from St Ives, two old women and a fiddler should dance as directed around it, the virgins were not to be more than 10 years of age and each virgin and the old woman was to receive 10 shillings and six pence and the fiddler one guinea (21 shillings).

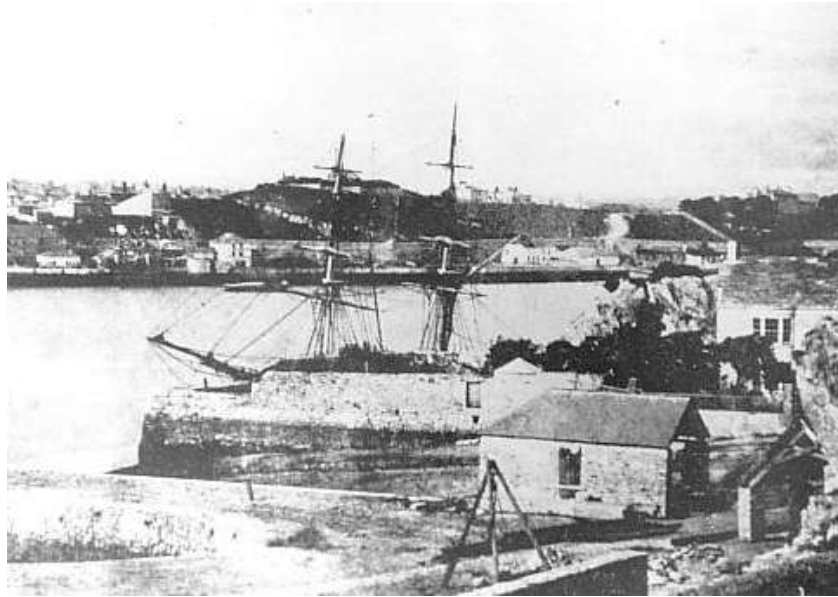
In addition to this the oldest man or his widow that had brought up the largest family by his industry and without aid or relief should receive £5-0s-0d After the ceremonies are over the three trustees, who could invite two friends, the mayor, the clergyman and their friends were to proceed to a dinner on which a certain sum of money was allocated in his will. This is known as "The Knill Festival"

Richard John of St Michaels Mount Nr Penzance was the commanding officer of Grayhound and went on to command the Revenue Cutter Dolphin, which was also owned by John Knill of St Ives and hired to the Customs Commissioner. Customs minutes October 23rd 1782 refers.

In 1805 under command of a Captain Phillip Lesbirel, Grayhound captured a Spanish warship and the captain was presented with a sword with a greyhound engraved on it.

These luggers were splendid fully decked vessels up to 75 foot long with covered decks, the ideal final form of smuggling lugger, which could be either clinker or

carvel construction. Speed was also an important factor because they could be required to out pace an excise man's cutter and yet it was not to jeopardise their seaworthiness. The fastest of these classes of boats could sail the 100 miles from Plymouth to Roscoff in 8 - 10 hours that's averaging a speed of some approx 12 knots with a fair wind and weather.



Franks Quarry, note the slipway

When fitted out as a Privateer on 19th August 1778 the Grayhound received letters of Marque being described as being 156 tons, single masted? (Is this a mistake did she not carry three masts), was fitted with 14 carriage guns, 3- pounders and 8 swivel guns, 14 small arms, 6 cutlasses, 14 barrels of powder, 40 rounds of great shot and 200 wt of small shot. She was manned by a crew of 47 and under her commander Richard John took many prizes, one of which was the captive of Johannes at the Star inn Marazion on the 12th March 1781. Richard John was also her commander when she was a Revenue cruiser he also went on to command the revenue cruiser Dolphin which was also owned by John Knill of St Ives and hired to the Customs Commissioners.

Many of these boats were built by eye and rule of thumb but others were built after being lofted out in the conventional manner. The luggers built by eye started with the laying of the keel, putting up the stem post, stern post, deadwoods and transom, mounting three frames on to the keel and nailing battens around to achieve the required shape.

The problems with building in this manner was that some boats were faster turning one way than they were others because the shape of the boat was not identical on both sides. While a boat that was correctly lined out would turn at exactly the same speed in both directions.



Assembling the ribs



Planking up the Grayhound

The new Greyhound is a 5/6th scale replica is presently being built by Chris Reeves and a team of boat builders in Millbrook and project managed by Marcus Rowden and Freya Hart who also did a considerable amount of work on the build. Many parts were manufactured at Chris's boatyard at Hounster and assembled at the Trago Voygers Boat House/ Slipway at Southdown. She was built using carvel planking construction and has a 105 ft overhaul length, a 65 ft long deck, a 19.35 ft beam, a 10ft draft, will weigh approx 50 ton and carry 3,500 feet of canvas on three masts.

The name "Grayhound" on her transom was carved by Marcus Rowden Project Manager/owner/boatbuilder.

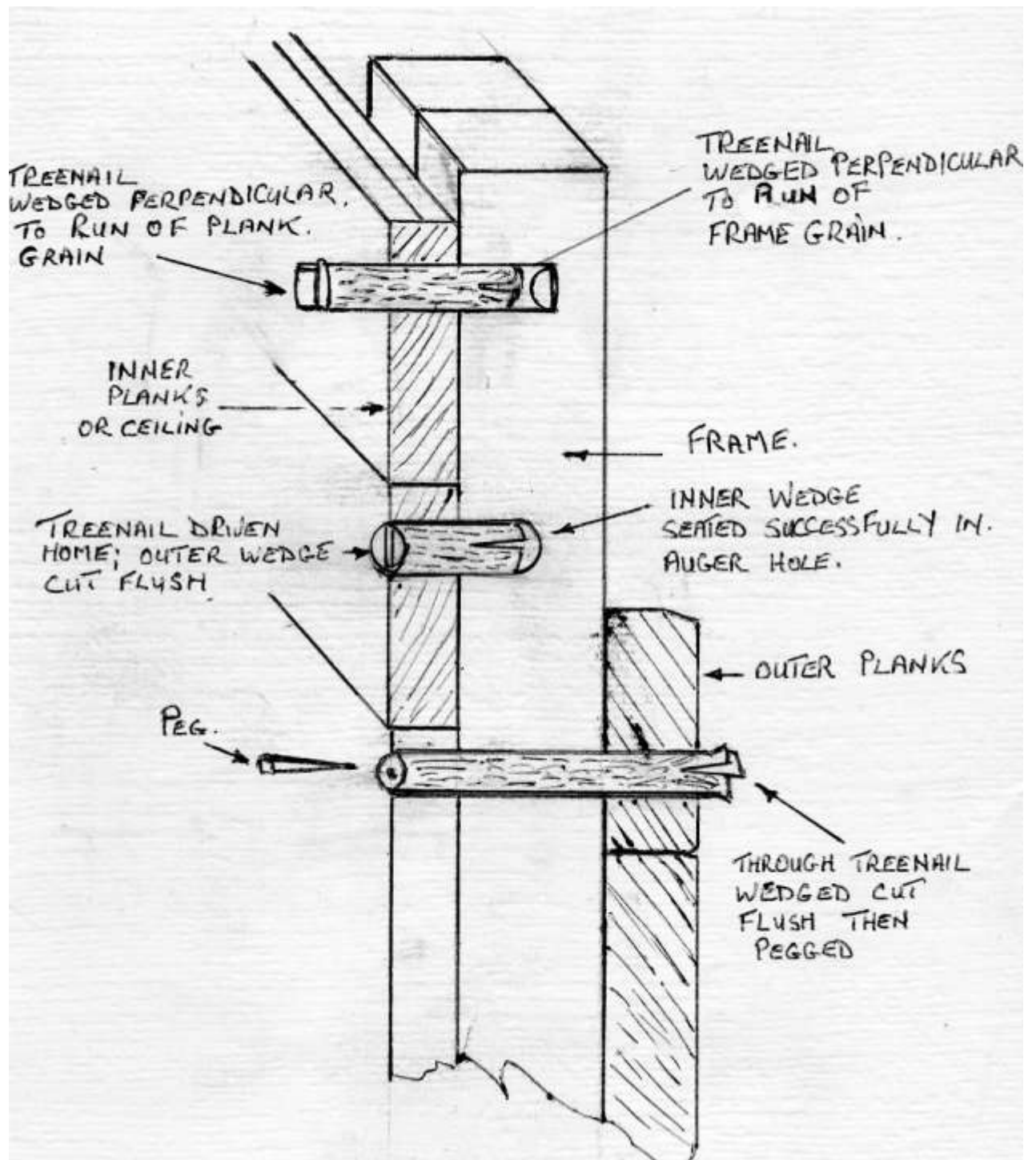
Sequent of events prior to building the Grayhound.

1. Planning Stage, this is where key date schedules are planned, i.e. keel laid, planks fitted, engine to be installed, removed from shed, launch, the details of the boats requirements, materials required, staffing, trades, sponsorship, costing, venue, equipment, plant etc.
2. Drawing/scaling the Plans to contain, planned items, information required on method of construction, materials, Length, width, depth, sail area, shapes etc.
3. Selecting the timber, what timber is required, what is available and where, at what costs.
4. Where the boat is to be built, availability of build material to match key date schedules etc.

How do they build a boat using Carvel Planking Construction?

Here the keel, stem and stem post were sawn from large pieces of timber, to the required shape and bolted/fastened together with bolts or treenails, Carvel built boats are always built the right way up, so to define the shape of the hull, a ribcage is added to the backbone/keel This is in the form of moulds, which can be thought of as temporary bulkheads spaced every few feet over the length of the boat.

Longitudinal stringers or rib bands are then fastened over the moulds to form a rigid frame work on which to build your boat. Frames can then be installed. Either inside or outside these stringers but on the Grayhound they were fitted inside. The floor is then assembled to connect the frames to the keel. Planking is applied over the frames, starting from the top and bottom and finishing in the middle to avoid distortion. Planking is glued and secured to each of the frames, along the Keel and to the stern and stem posts but not to each other. When completed the gaps between the planks are caulked to give a watertight and rigid structure when the boat is launched by forcing each plank against its neighbour compressing the caulking as the wood swells.



Treenails were manufactured and used, and fitted as shown in my sketch above to hold the timber construction together, Each wooden peg is made by hand, cut to size, rounded and hammered into a drilled hole . They are wedged both ends to create a splayed wooden rivet and will out last any metal fastening.

Caulking

Is a process used in wooden ships/boats to seal the seams to make them watertight, the same term also refers to the application of flexible sealing compounds to close up crevices? On wooden vessels caulking uses fibres of cotton, and oakum (oak fiber soaked in pine tar). These fibres are driven into the wedge shaped seams between the planks with a caulking mallet and a broad chisel like tool called a caulking iron. The caulking is then covered over with a mixture of red lead putty in the case of the hull seams. Or in the case of deck seams with melted pine pitch in a process referred to as paying. Modern marine sealants are now frequently used in place of the pitch.

The building team is headed by Chris Rees, a man of many talents and skills, a man who has a real passion for luggers. Chris designed and built Pete Goss's boat The Spirit of Mystery for his very successful venture to Australia.

Carving the Stem



The final Planking near completion



Near completion in readiness for the launch



On the Slipway for final painting



Launch Day being towed down the slipway

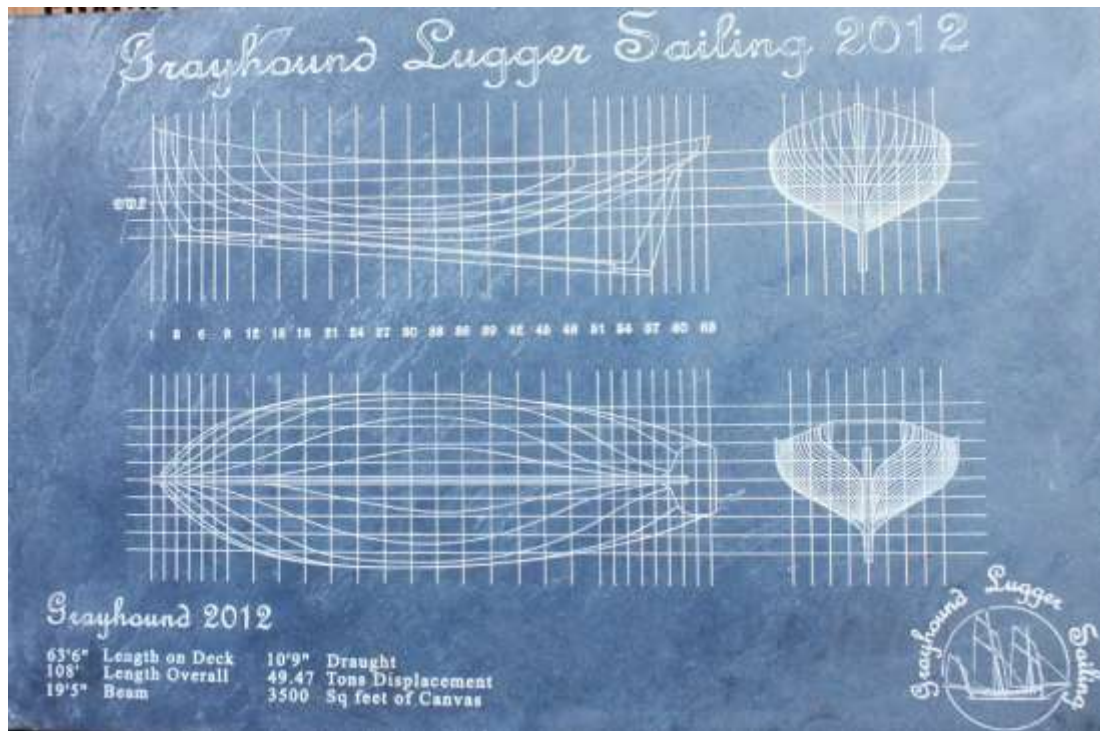


The Launch



The Maiden Voyage.





It has been a very interest project to watch this wonderful boat being built, it is a credit to all who built her, and I am sure that Marcus, Freya and Malachi will have many happy years sailing her in all parts of the world. I would also like to thank them both for their help and kindness during the build; Marcus gave me complete freedom to climb all over this immense project and take any photographs that I wished. I would also like to thank my friend Chris Rees who allowed me to view the plans of the original Grayhound and do some research way back in 2008.

The above information was researched by me with the help of Tony Pawlyn head of research of the Bartlett Library National Maritime Museum Falmouth way back in 2008 and carried a reference number of 2008/202

Written and researched by Colyn Thomas
For Rame Heritage

