

17th Century

Dutch Merchant Ships

Text, Photos and Plans for the Ship Modeler

by A.B. Hoving

Plans by C.A. Emke

Models by H. Tomesen, Graphics by E. Hoving

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SeaWatch Books continues to outdo itself with each new book this company publishes. Just in time for the holidays, there's no doubt that *17th Century Dutch Merchant Ships*, by Ab Hoving, should be on every model ship builders wish list. The book begins with an introduction that explains that although the Dutch East India Company and Dutch Admiralty have received the lion's share of attention from historians, it was the great number of



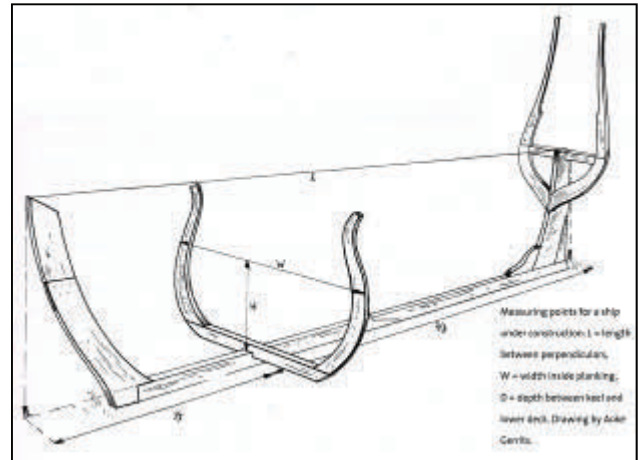
unheralded merchant vessels that drove the Dutch economy. This book focuses on the type of vessels that formed the bulk of this vast fleet.

In the early chapters, the author discusses the sources used to compile this book. They include paintings, drawings, etchings, grisailles, archaeological findings, ship models, written sources, and experiments. In many cases, Mr. Hoving outlines the strengths and weaknesses pertaining to each reference.

A brief description of the various trade routes, and the materials and products that were transported by Dutch vessels is outlined. This also provides the reader with some understanding as to how the Dutch Republic became the center for trade in 17th Century Europe, and

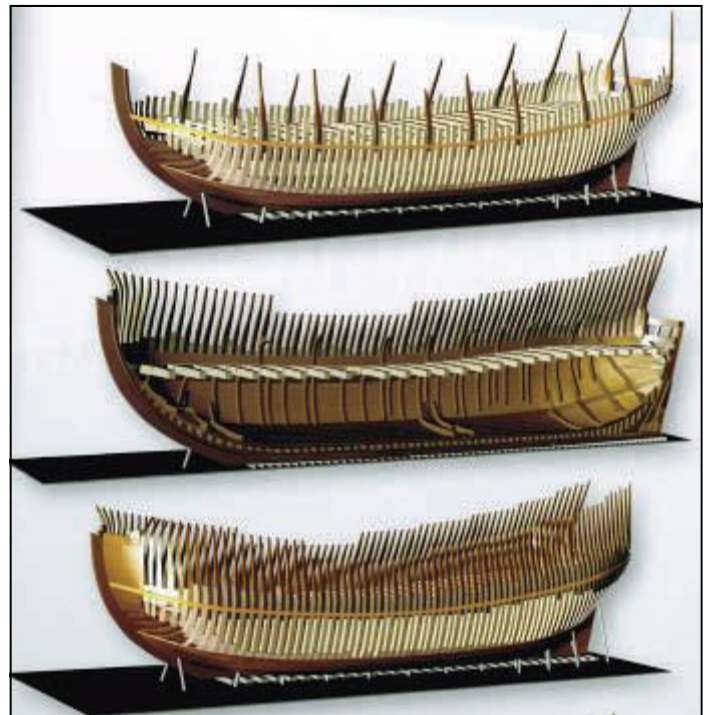
precipitated conflicts between the Dutch, and France, England, and Spain.

Dutch shipbuilding practices in the seventeenth century are the focal point in Chapter 3. The author explains how draughts and blueprints did not exist. Instead, shipwrights relied on a simplistic Proportional System, which worked remarkably well when building large, complex



sailing ships. Two basic rules of thumb are described that impacted the design of the ship, and helped determine the strengths and thicknesses of key timbers. Hoving explains how these rules were adjusted, according to the purpose for which the vessel was being built.

With Chapter 4, 17th Century shipbuilding concepts are melded with 21st Century technology. This chapter is



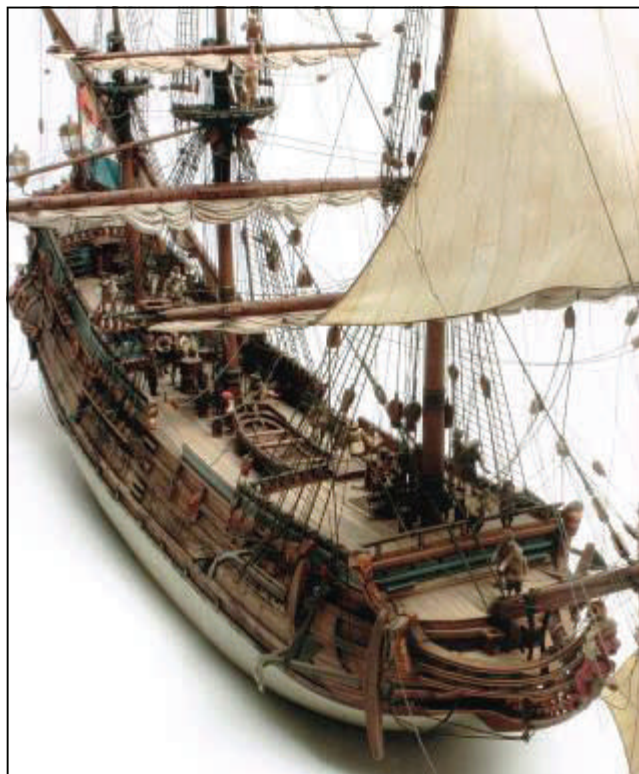
profusely illustrated with digitally produced sketches outlining the construction of a 134-foot pinas. These full color illustrations are interspersed with numerous historical diagrams. Together, they provide the reader with a better understanding of how the seventeenth century shipwright was able to complete a large vessel in as little as four to five months, utilizing only twenty to twenty-two men!

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The next chapter is devoted to ship types, and is, to say the least, a visual treat! Numerous full two-page color illustrations depict the various vessels in their natural environment. Models, primarily by Herbert Tomessen, were



photographed by Emiel Hoving, the author's son, and photoshopped into remarkably realistic scenes. The close-up photos of many of Tomessen's models will be of considerable help to the model ship builder.



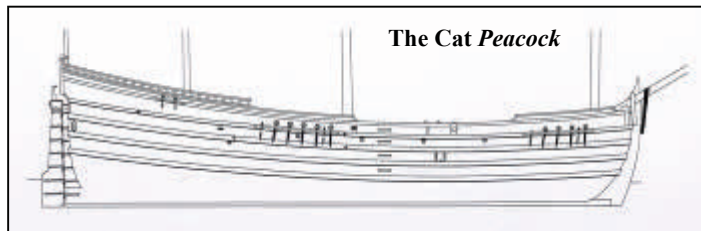
The featured vessels, twelve in all, are broken down into four primary groups: seagoing ships, coastal carriers,

inshore vessels, and fishing vessels used as traders. Within each of these groups are sub-types.

The seagoing craft include the pinas, the fluit (flute), of which three variations are discussed, and the cat. Coastal carriers include the boyer and galliot, while the narrow or wide ship, and the kaag are the inshore vessels. The fishermen/traders category is composed of the buss, pink, and hooker.

In each case, the author discusses the origins, history and a brief anatomy of each type. He also explains how the cargo that would be carried by a vessel could impact its design, which in turn determined its area of operation.

Hoving's easy style of writing makes for some enjoyable reading. Case in point, his comments about the Cat, arguably, one of the homeliest vessels ever built. With a slight touch of humor, the author points out unique as-

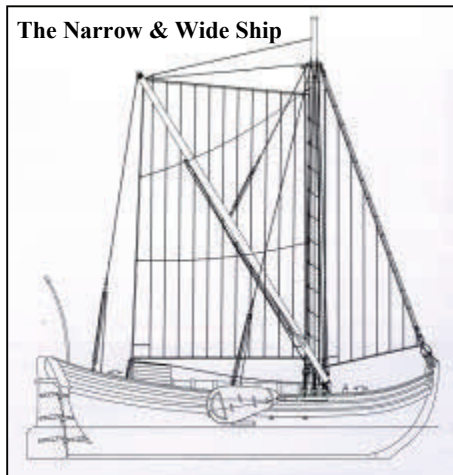


pects of this craft, which include rigging and sailing peculiarities. This type of insight is a common theme throughout *Dutch Merchant Ships*.

The book concludes with a bibliography and an appendix. This latter item features a table that compares the formulas for various scantlings as outlined by Nicolaes Witsen and Cornelius van Yk.

Containing 152 pages, *Dutch Merchant Ships* is not an especially large book. Yet, by itself, it would still be worth the asking price, \$75.00 plus S&H. Add the portfolio of plans by Cor Emke, and this publication becomes a remarkable value. All the vessels featured in this book are presented on 24 sheets measuring 33" x 27".

Seven ships are drawn to a scale of 1:96, and include the pinas *Witsen*, the flutes *Zeehaen*, *Langewijk*, *Roode Leeuw*, the cat *Peacock*, and two fishing/trader vessels, a Buss of 1598, and a Hooker. The other five smaller craft are portrayed at a scale of 1:48, and include the Boyer, Galliot, Narrow and Wide Ships, Kaag, and Pink.



17th Century Dutch Merchant Ships is a remarkable achievement, and would be an excellent addition to the library of any maritime historian or model ship builder. It is highly recommended.

Reviewed by
BobF