The Ketch-rigged Sloop *Speedwell* of 1752

Volume I, The Hull

by Greg Herbert and David Antscherl

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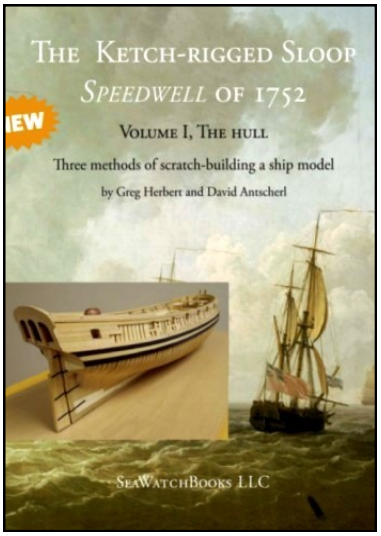
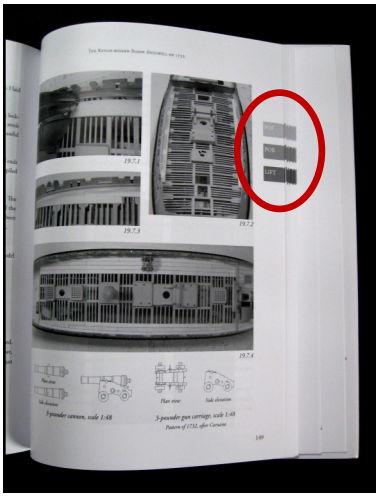
No doubt, when modelers realized that SeaWatch-Books' latest offering, The Ketch-rigged Sloop *Speedwell* of 1752, would be authored by Greg Herbert and David Antscherl, the level of anticipation ramped up considerably. The last time these two gentlemen teamed up, the net result was the benchmark *Swan* series *The Fully Framed Model.*



This latest work outlines the construction of a class of vessel not modeled very often. Built with light scantlings, and armed with 8 three pounders and 10 swivels, *Speedwell's* primary task was to track down privateers and smugglers. Her career was long, but uneventful, and she would end her service in the Royal Navy as a fire ship renamed *Spitfire*.

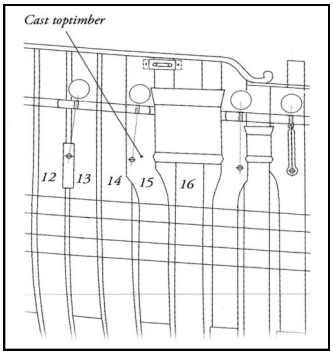
This first book provides an illustrated guide for building the hull, and offers the modeler detailed information for constructing the model three different ways. These methods are plank on frame (POF), plank on bulkhead (POB), and solid hull using the lift method (LIFT). The authors deal with the different, and, in many cases, similar complexities for constructing the hulls by providing tabs on each page that are applicable to each method.



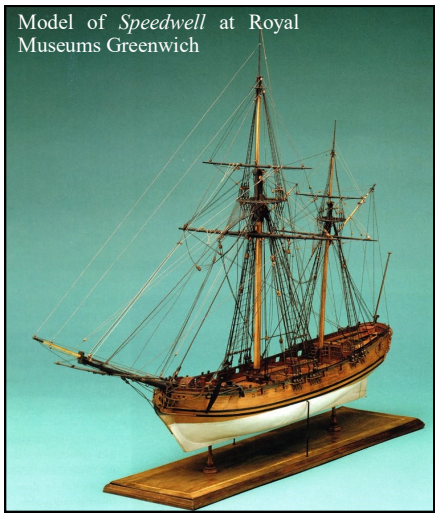
The five sheets of plans that accompany this book were drawn by Mr. Antscherl, and the attention to detail is most noteworthy. An excellent example are the bevel lines incorporated into the bulkhead drawings, and the recommended locations for the pedestal mounting nuts. This last item is not addressed very often by authors.

The first chapter discusses the various references used to create the plans included with this book. Three draughts from the Royal Museums Greenwich, and a contemporary model of the *Speedwell* were the primary sources. It is interesting to note that they did not always agree with each other. Antscherl feels that this is attributable to the fact that the three draughts reflect first the original design, then the alterations made at Chatham, and finally as the vessel was built.

The fact that *Speedwell* was revised during construction resulted in a number of unique features. For those wanting to build the framed up version, the most notable might be the large number of cast toptimbers located around the gunports. Normally, this situation was avoided as much as possible when designing a ship. This helped cut labor and material costs.



David Antscherl starts out Chapter Two by making an interesting statement: "*This chapter will be of interest only to those who wish to develop their own working drawings of other vessels from Royal Museums Greenwich or other contemporary plans. Otherwise, turn to Chapter Three.*" This no doubt reflects the practical attitude that was taken when this book was written. Nevertheless, the information provided in this chapter is well worth understanding.


Model of *Speedwell* at Royal Museums Greenwich

There are also two appendices in this chapter. Appendix 2.1 discusses the anomalies that occurred between the three draughts and the RMG model. Antscherl explains these differences, and provides reasons why he chose one reference over the other.

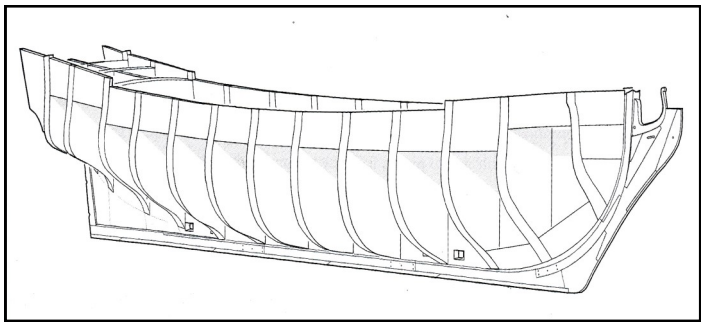
Appendix 2.2 features three folios taken from the Navy Board's Progress and Dimensions Book. These were kept as part of the mid-eighteenth century expenditure records. This short segment makes for some fascinating reading.

With Chapter Three, Greg Herbert begins the journey that will take the reader through three different types of hull construction. He points out up front that the reader should possess a basic knowledge of ship modeling, terminology, and eighteenth century ship construction. Herbert implies that this book does not contain in-depth descriptions and techniques on how to build a framed model. For that he recommends *The Fully Framed Model, HMN Swan Class Sloops, 1767-1780.*

After discussing the construction of the keel and stem assemblies, which would be common to all three hull types, Herbert addresses the plank on bulkhead version. It's interesting to note that the central spine is a component that is common to both the plank on bulkhead and lift

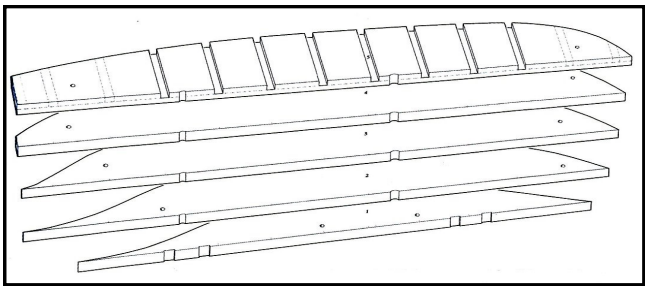
"Speedwell of 1752", continued on next page

versions. Nevertheless they are not identical, so selecting the appropriate pattern from the plans is important.



The author provides some nice tips for cutting the rabbet, shaping the central spine, installing filler blocks, and using captive nuts for mounting the model during construction as well as when it is completed. With the majority of the models on the market today being of the plank on bulkhead variety, this segment of the book makes a great tutorial for the early stages of building these kits.

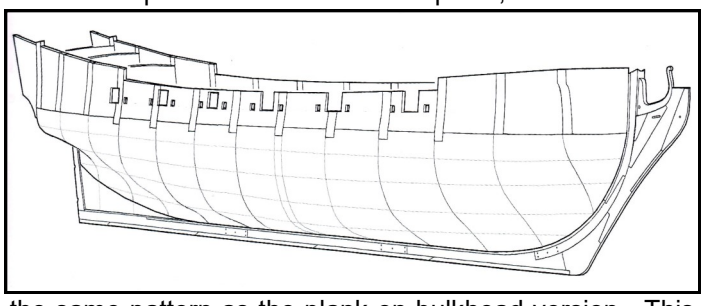
The plans for the lift hull model provide patterns for five 1/2" thick layers for each side of the hull. Essentially, the modeler is building two half-hulls that are eventually joined to the central spine. This approach alleviates the



need for wider, more expensive stock, and allows the hull to be more easily hollowed out if you wish to detail the interior.

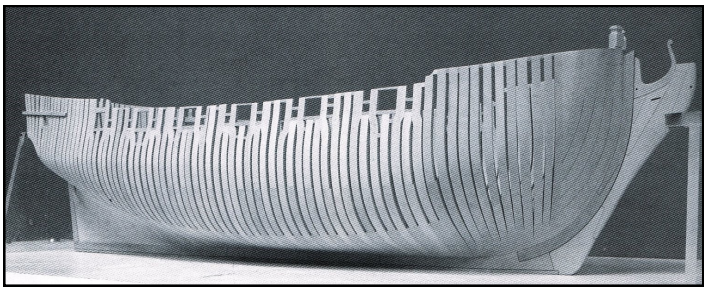
The upper most lift can be divided into two 1/4" layers, which eliminates the need for cutting slots that will accommodate the partial bulkheads. The reader is also reminded that due to the tumblehome amidships, the lower face of each lift may actually be wider at this location on the hull. One nice touch is the fact that all the lift patterns feature drill center marks for locating pegs. They prevent slippage during the gluing up and clamping process. When assembled and shaped, the patterns will provide the hull shape to the inside of the outer planking.

After the partial bulkheads are in place, the hull follows

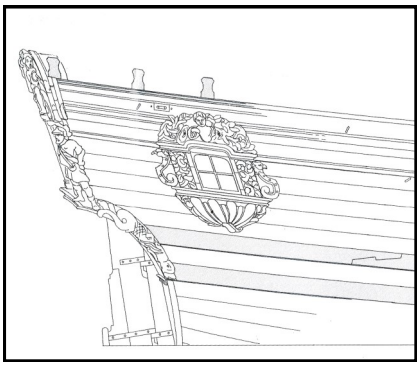


the same pattern as the plank on bulkhead version. This includes installation of filler blocks between the partial bulkheads, marking out the gun ports and sweep ports, and attaching the side counter timbers.

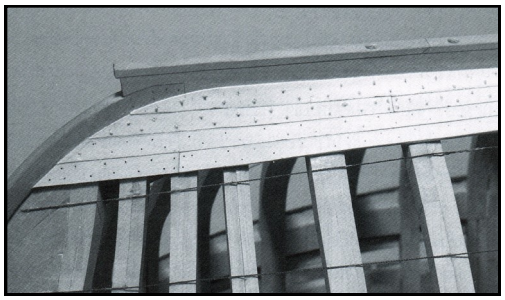
At this point, Herbert turns his attention to the plank on frame hull. The next seven chapters are devoted solely to its construction. Herbert's methodical approach while constructing all the components is most noteworthy.



One of the more interesting aspects of this book is the effort put forth by the authors to properly interpret the draughts and Royal Museums Greenwich model of *Speedwell.* An excellent example was determining whether the quarter badge lights were real or dummies. Only after very close examination of the RMG model, and considerable deliberation, did the authors feel that their decision was the correct one. Nevertheless, the builder is supplied with alternate framing plans for that area of the model if they wish to proceed in the other direction.



The final 12 chapters are, for the most part, applicable to all three hull types. Herbert's workmanship is outstanding, and he offers numerous hints and tips. Hull planking is discussed in considerable detail in volume 1, which is a big plus for those not well versed in this important aspect of model ship construction. Herbert simplifies the process by breaking down the procedure into component steps, which include butt-joint patterns, lining off the hull, main wale construction, treenailing, and spiling. A properly laid out and proportioned garboard strake receives special attention.



Volume 1 concludes with two appendices. Appendix A discusses chocked joints, and Appendix B outlines the fabrication and use of molding cutters.

This latest SeaWatch offering features 8 pages of color photos, and, as previously mentioned, a packet of plans consisting of five sheets. At a scale of 1:48 they will produce a model with an overall hull length of 21 1/2".

This review has touched on only a few of the many aspects this work has to offer. "*The Ketch-rigged Sloop Speedwell of 1752*" would be a noteworthy addition to any ship modeler's library. This book is highly recommended.