

Boatbuilding Terms

After hook: One of the three main hull timbers (frames) that give the shape of the boat's hull. The after hook would be positioned on the keel in what would form the back section of the boat. Also see fore hook and mid-ship bend.

Apron: A deadwood behind and attached to the stem of a boat, used to strengthen the stem and provide greater nailing surface for plank ends.

Baccalieu bully: At around 30 to 40 feet long these boats were generally decked, broader than the skiff, very strong, sturdy and were powered by sails in the earlier years and later by engines. They were used in the cod fishery at Baccalieu Island. When this fishery declined these boats were no longer built.

Baccalieu skiff: At around 30 to 40 feet long these open boats were narrower than the bully. Some of the larger of these were like small schooners but the overall hull design was very much the same as the larger trap skiffs. They were used in the cod fishery at Baccalieu Island.

Backbone: Bottom and end section of the boat consisting of the keel, stem, sternpost and deadwoods.

Batten: A long, flexible, thin and narrow strip. Battens were temporarily bent and fastened around the fore hook, mid-ship bend and after hook, and attached to the counter (back of the boat) and stem (front of the boat). This gave the shape of the boat's hull. Battens were also known as ribbands.

Berth: A location along the shore where a cod trap was set. As cod traps were left in the same location for the duration of a fishing season, to get a good location, fishermen would set their trap very early in the spring while ice was still in the bay. This practice sometimes led to the damage or loss of traps and moorings because of ice floes. To avoid such losses berths were eventually allocated on a random draw system.

Bilge: See "Crop of the bulge".

Binding strake: The top plank on each side of a boat.

Boat hook: A long wooden handle with a curved and straight metal end that was used to pull ropes and buoys out of the water and into the boat.

Boxy: A type of wood imperfection that made wood unsuitable for boat timber. This dark-coloured imperfection made it more likely to split; such wood was discarded or used as fire wood.

Breast hook: A piece of v-shaped wood, installed at the stem of the boat. The breast hook gave support and strength to the bow of the boat.

Bulkhead: A partition in a boat, usually of vertical boards, which fill in the area from the thwarts (seats) to the floor.

Buoy: A float used to mark the site of fishing traps and lines on top of the water.

Cat: A sled used for hauling firewood or wood for boat timbers. Dogs, goats or horses were used to help pull the cat.

Caulking: The process of filling the boat's seams with tarred rope fibers to ensure the boat is watertight.

Ceilings: The floor boards, which run lengthwise, in the mid-ship room at the center of the boat.

Cod trap: Introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century, this type of fishing trap would stay in position throughout the fishing season, being periodically emptied. The leader section, or straight net, was attached to the shoreline and led into the main section of the trap. Fish swimming along the shoreline toward the net would be rerouted to follow the leader into the box-shaped section of the cod trap. Once inside the box section, fish swam around the sides and could not easily escape.

Collar: A mooring or place to tie on the larger boats, located in the harbour.

Counter: The back of the boat. Also see Transom.

Covering boards: The top section of the gunwales (top edge of the boat).

(Crop of the) bulge or "Crops": The point on a boat where the hull shape changes from side to bottom.

Cuddy: The small, decked compartment built behind the stem of the boat for storage of things that needed to be kept dry.

Dabber: A single hook set into lead, lighter in weight than the jigger. The dabber would be pulled up and down to tempt the cod to take the hook or could be used with bait.

Deadwood: Piece of shaped wood used to join together backbone parts such as the stem and stern pieces to the keel.

Dell: The one or two foot wide cavity between the engine house and the mid-ship room of a boat. The floor boards covering this section were designed to be removable, so the bilge water could be discarded.

Dip net: A hand-held, closed net, attached to a round metal hoop on the end of a pole or handle. This net was usually used for scooping fish out of the cod trap into the boat.

Drying up: The process of gathering up the cod trap until the fish could not move around. They could

then be scooped into the boat.

Fairing: The process of smoothing a surface such as the boat's hull.

Fish prong: A double hook on a long pole, usually used to throw the fish from the boat onto the stage head and then into a holdingbox.

Flake: The raised wooden platform for drying salted codfish.

Flat: The most popular small boat design today is the flat, also known as the speedboat. This boat has a wider, straighter, flat-bottom hull with a larger upright counter to accommodate an outboard motor. The basic hull is a variation of the early punt.

Floor or flooring: Piece of wood fastened to timbers and keel that serves to reinforce the two members of a timber pair when they meet at the keel.

Fore hook: One of the three main hull timbers (frames) that give the shape of the boat's hull. The fore hook would be positioned on the keel in what would form the bow (front section) of the boat. Also see after hook and mid-ship bend.

Fuller: The last plank installed on each side of the boat, usually near the crop of the bulge between the top and bottom planking.

Galley: An old metal tub or bucket used for cooking on the boat. It would have ventilation holes cut in the sides and would be half filled with sand. A small fire would be started inside the bucket using short billets of birch, preferred because it didn't give off many sparks. A pot would then be placed on top of the galley.

Gangboards: The covering boards that fit snugly across the mid-ship room. These protected the fish and created a platform in the centre of the boat for working, cooking, and eating.

Garboard plank: The bottom plank on either side of the boat next to the keel.

Grapnel and rode: The anchor and line used to hold a boat in a preferred location for fishing, in a sheltered cove while cooking or baiting a trawl, or in place at the stage or wharf.

Gunwale: The top edge of the boat that includes the top, inside batten, covering boards and the outside rubbers.

Half-model: A small scaled-down version of half of a boat carved from a solid block of wood. The shape of this model would be used to obtain the shape and dimensions for the full-sized boat to be built.

Hand gaff: A hook with a short handle that was used to lift large fish in over the side of the boat.

Hand-line: A single, baited, hook and line used for fishing.

Haul: To pull up fishing nets and traps from the water to retrieve the catch. For example, gathering the cod trap together in preparation for emptying would be referred to as "hauling the codtrap."

Jigger: A fishing device with two or more hooks set into lead shaped like a small fish. Used without bait, they were pulled up and down to tempt the squid or cod to take the hook.

Keel: The straight piece of wood running the length of the bottom of the boat. The keel is the major part of the boat's backbone.

Knee: The naturally angled section of the tree formed by the stem and root sections. A number of these knees, in different sizes and angles, were required for the construction of certain types of boats.

Longliner: Built to fish further offshore, these were 35 to 40 feet in length, fully decked, and designed to handle more modern engines and newer fishing methods.

Lug: To carry, usually on the shoulder.

Make-and-break engine: A one-cylinder, gasoline engine, used to power a boat. These engines became available in North America in the first or second decade of the twentieth century. Their introduction affected the design and use of boats.

Mid-ship bend: One of the three main hull timbers (frames) that give the shape of the boat's hull. The mid-ship bend would be positioned at or near the center of the keel in what would form the middle section of the boat. Also see fore hook and after hook.

Mid-ship room: The space for holding fish created between the two middle thwarts of the boat. This area would be covered by gang boards to protect the fish.

Motorboat: Around 1910 trap skiffs and other boats were fitted with engines and then were also referred to as motorboats. At 20 to 30 feet, they were powered by early gasoline, one-cylinder engines. They were used for fishing cod traps near-shore and baited trawls (long-lines) further offshore.

Oakum: The tarred rope fibers used for caulking (filling) the boat's seams.

On the edge: The area of the bay where the bottom changes from shallower rocky ground to deeper muddy or sandy ground.

Outboard rudder: Hung from the counter of the boat, the rudder was attached to the counter with a

system of eye bolts, which acted as a hinge, and a straight bolt at the bottom, which swung in a fitting on the keel. The base of the rudder was located just behind the propeller so its momentum could be directed. A tiller stick, a wooden piece fitted to the rudder-head that extended 4 to 6 inches over the top of the counter, was attached to maneuver the rudder.

Piggin: The wooden container or pail used to bail the bilge water from the dell of the boat.

Pit saw: Before the invention of the saw mill, round pieces of timber and planks were cut using the pit saw. It was operated by two men, one standing above and the other below a constructed raised scaffold. A natural hole in the ground (pit) with supports over it was also used, giving the name pit saw. They would use the saw by pulling it up and down through a piece of timber, cutting it lengthwise.

Plim up: The process of the boat becoming watertight as water swells the wood planking and caulking. Boats would usually plim up within a few days after being launched into the water.

Plumb bob: A weight suspended on a rope, which is used in boat building to check vertical balance and alignment.

Punt: A 14 to 18 foot long, sleek, narrow, and shallow boat, designed to be powered by sails or oars. Some uses included fishing near shore, assisting larger boats and ferrying fishermen between larger vessels and the shore. Some punts were built of slighter materials and were used for winter bird and seal hunting. The punt is also called a rodney.

Rabbet joint: A groove cut into wood so that it will accept and form a join with another piece of wood.

Rake: Inclination from the vertical, usually applied to masts, stems or sternposts.

Ribbands, ribbon, ribs: Thin, flexible strips of wood that are temporarily attached to moulds in order to approximate a hull shape.

Risings: Long battens, usually two or three inches wide and three-quarters of an inch thick, that are fastened to the inside of all timbers from stem to stern about six to eight inches below the sheer line. The boat's thwarts usually sit on and are attached to the risings.

Rodney: See punt.

Roller: The v-grooved, wooden wheel that rotated on a supported axle. It was attached at the bow of a boat and was used to help haul in the trawl line or to haul up the boats grapnel mooring.

Rubber: The part of the gunwale that forms the outside top edge of the boat and helps protect the boats sides from bumping other boats and the hauling of fishing lines across its gunwales.

Rule staff: A specially selected flexible batten the length of the hull and about 3 or 4 inches wide that was temporarily clamped along the length of the hull and used to obtain the shape of the edge of the next plank to be installed.

Scarf: To join pieces of wood together such as joining the stem to the keel using a deadwood.

Schooner: These decked boats were designed for sailing and varied greatly in size. Schooners were used to transport cured fish, fishing supplies, food staples and other goods. A small number of schooners over the years were also used for fishing at Baccalieu and Labrador.

Score-hole: The hole cut in the port side of the counter (back of the boat) to accommodate the sculling oar.

Sculling oar: This long oar could be used for steering if the boat's sails were up or when others were rowing. It could also be used alone to propel the boat, this was called "sculling the boat."

Sheer line (or Sheer strike): The line represented by the shape of the top of the boat's hull from stem to stern.

Shoots: The cross-beam floor boards in the standing rooms of a boat.

Sir marks: The marks on the three-piece mould showing the relative positions for the three sections in order to form the different timber shapes. Also see three-piece mould.

Slipway: The ramp for hauling boats out of the water and for launching.

Soundbone: The backbone of a fish.

Splitting: Removing the soundbone of the fish in preparation for cleaning and salting.

Stage: A small, shed-like building located on the shoreline used to house fishing gear and to gut, clean and salt the fish before they were laid out to dry on the flakes.

Stem: The very front of the boat.

Stern knee: A knee installed on each stern quarter around the top of the boat's counter and part of the boat's side to strengthen the stern section.

Stuffing box: The metal, watertight coupling through which the propeller shaft of a boat could rotate. This was located in a shaft hole bored into the bottom of the stern post.

Stopwater: The round wooden peg driven into a bored hole at the bottom edge of a boat's garboard

plank where it intersects the scarf joint. This peg prevented water from seeping into the hull. Stopwaters were located at the stem and keel scarfs and where the deadwoods or stern members met the keel.

Store: A storage shed and workshop where boats and other woodworking projects were undertaken. Retail outlets were referred to as shops.

Suent: A gradual and smooth curve over a surface area or length of plank or board.

Swab: A mop made from discarded rags nailed to the end of a wooden handle, used to clean the boat after the catch was removed.

Thole pin: A wooden peg, located at the gunwale on each side of the boat, used for leverage when rowing. The thole pin would be used in combination with a whiff.

Three-piece mould: A mould made up of two curved pieces and a straight piece. When placed in certain positions they would give the needed shapes for the hull timbers of the boat. Also see sir mark.

Thwarts: The wood pieces that are attached across the width of the boat forming the seats. Thwarts were made four to six inches wide and one and one half to two inches thick.

Timbers: Timbers referred to the curved frames, or ribs, located at intervals along the length of the boat on both sides. These were installed in matched pairs and attached to the keel. All planks were fastened to each timber.

Timbering out: The process of cutting, fitting and installing the boat's timbers. For example, if the timbers were in place in the mid-ship section, one would say: "the boat is timbered out in the mid-ship."

Transom: The transverse, roughly vertical, panel forming the after end of a boat's hull. Also see Counter.

Trap skiff: The trap skiff was larger, at around 20 to 30 feet, stronger and more stable than the punt. It was powered by sails or oars in early days and by engines in later years. Trap skiffs, also called motorboats after engines became available, were used to haul large cod traps near-shore.

Trawl: Fishing gear that was made up of a long line that had attached to it many short lines with hooks at their ends. Long trawls were weighted with a rock at each end so the trawl would sit at or near bottom. Each end would also have a buoy attached to mark its location. Hooks were baited, as a section of the trawl was put into the water, this was called "setting the trawl." Trawls were stored and transported in large wooden tubs.

Whiff: The looped piece of rope that was attached over a thole pin. When rowing, each oar was hooked through a whiff.