

LIVERPOOL AND THE NEWFOUNDLAND TRADE.

A Paper submitted to the Liverpool Society  
for Nautical Research

by

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No 4

The earliest record of Liverpool's association with the Colony of Newfoundland is to be found among the State Papers preserved at the Public Records Office.

In a list of those who contributed monies or commodities *in 1582* for Sir Humphrey Gilbert's venture to Newfoundland appears the name of "Mr. Haies, gent of Leerpole."

(Calendar State Papers Dom. Eliz. Vol 156.No.13)

Little evidence is forthcoming from the Liverpool Town Books in respect of seventeenth century trade with the island, but there can be no doubt that the hardy Mersey mariners of those days who ventured as far as the American Plantations and the West Indies also voyaged to the fishing El Dorado of the shores and banks of Newfoundland.

On 18th December, 1697, Thomas Johnson, that astute Liverpool merchant who, for some thirty years, guided the mercantile and political affairs of the town, wrote to his colleague, Richard Norris, concerning "the tremendous quantity of rock salt in Cheshire, in his (Johnson's) opinion enough to supply England, Ireland, and the trade in Newfoundland." Several of Johnson's subsequent letters, contained in the Norris Collection at the Liverpool Reference Library, mention the Newfoundland "galleons" from Liverpool and refer also to a trade in salt from Cadiz to Newfoundland. In

1693, Richard Norris received permission from the government to sail the ship CHARITY to Newfoundland on fishery business. She sailed from "Highlake" (Hoylake), uninsured, Norris carrying the full risk of the venture, and being compelled to give bond in £500 for the ship's actual discharge in Newfoundland. The CHARITY took out a cargo of salt which she had loaded at Middlewich.

That Liverpool merchants were by this time established in the Newfoundland trade is confirmed by certain entries in the Town Books relating to the transportation of apprentices to the American Plantations, including Newfoundland, as shewn in the following transcriptions:

Acct of Servants bound to Mr. Wm. Middleton, Master of the IRISH LAWRELL of Leverpoole bound for Newfoundland, as Vizt:

Feb. 21. 1699/1700

	<u>Age</u>	<u>Term</u>
Henry Powell of Wells, Somerset	21 yrs.	4 yrs.
James Tucker, of Wells.	20 "	4 "
Thomas Jones of Carnarvan	20 "	4 "
Thomas Jackson of Blakely in Lanc'	19 "	4 "
Wm. Williams of Narbot in Pembrokeshire	21 "	4 "

(against the name of Thomas Jackson, there is a marginal endorsement: "Run. February 27").

Account of Servants bound to Capt. Edward Tarleton and Went to Newfoundland in the YORKSHIRE LAWRELL of Leverpoole, as Vizt:

Feb. 27. 1699/1700.

Evan Owen of Ossesstry in Shropshire	20 yrs	4 yrs.
Thomas Williams of Carnarvan in Wales	12 "	9 "
Hugh Radish of Rachdale in Lanc'	19 "	4 "
John Stock of " "	23 "	4 "
John Barnes of Hazledene in Lanc'	13 "	8 "
John Bretherton of Nantwich in Cheshire	20 "	4 "

Servants bound to Mr. John Rimmer, Master of the Good Ship PLANTER bound for Newfoundland.

Mar ye 18. 1699

James Day of Dublin in Ireland

James Garnette of Rainhill in Lanc'

<u>Age</u>	<u>Term</u>
22 yrs.	5 yrs.
22 "	5 "

The importance of the Newfoundland trade at the opening of the eighteenth century was apparent to the government, for on 17th September, 1714, the mayor and magistrates of Liverpool, in response to an enquiry from the Council of Trade and Plantations, reported that a survey of the island would be very useful to Liverpool merchants and navigators. The document, signed the mayor, Thomas Coore, and five others, is **preserved** among the State Papers. Owing to the meagreness of our local records for the first fifty years of that century, and particularly those relating to the Liverpool docks, it is impossible to determine the progress of the trade during that period, but a search of the Liverpool Custom House records might result in much helpful information in that respect. At that time Bristol, Exeter and other Devonshire ports held the major part of the Newfoundland trade, but occasional newspaper notices of the 1760's and 1770' testify to some measure of Liverpool's commerce with the Colony. Gregson reports that, in 1764, only six vessels were entered inwards from Newfoundland, while fourteen were cleared outwards. The following advertisements of 1766 and 1773 are typical contemporary

notices of the trade:

Just imported from Newfoundland  
A parcel of COD LIVER OIL and Salt  
CODFISH, to be sold by  
Elmes Bowden and Co.

To be Sold  
Just arrived from Newfoundland  
Cod Liver Oil and fine dry Cod Fish  
Apply to John Roberts

Newfoundland COD LIVER OIL  
and  
Fine Salt CODFISH just arrived  
To be sold by Elmes Bowden and Co.  
at the Upper End of King Street.  
Who have also a Parcel of SEAL SKINS for Sale.

It will be noted that, as yet, the trade was small in compass and this, no doubt, was due to the fact that the more lucrative slave trade between Africa and the Plantations proved more attractive to Liverpool merchants than the hazardous venture to Newfoundland. Towards the end of the century, however, the rapid growth of population in south west Lancashire, and the factorisation of that area, created wider demand for the aquatic products of Newfoundland, i.e. codfish, cod-oil and seal-oil or "train oil" as it later became known. The following is a list of vessels employed in the Newfoundland trade, according to the shipping register for 1790+

ACTIVE	brig	T. Harrison, master. 130 tons. Built at Chester, 1775. Owner: Wright and Co.
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BETSEY & MARY, brig.	L. Roberts, master. 106 tons. Built, Wales 1790. Owner: <del>Wright and Cox</del> W. Walton.
CATHERINE, brig.	Fuzwell, master. 156 tons. Built, Liverpool 1768 Owner: Barker & Co.
FANCY, brig	H. Dwyre, master. 120 tons. Built, America 1776 Owner: Myer & Co.
HERO, brig.	J. Stewart, master. <del>176</del> 174 tons Built, Whitehaven 1788. Owner: Brocklebank.
ROYAL RECOVERY, ship	Murphy, master. 186 tons. <del>Built</del> , Liverpool 1790. Owner: Meyer or Myer & Co.
SPEEDWELL, ship	<del>M'Lelland</del> , master. 250 tons. Built, Liverpool 1783. Owner: J. & J Holmes.
THETIS, ship	D Baird, master. 174 tons. Built, Liverpool 1777. Owner: Jackson & Co.
TRITON, brig.	Langden, master. 98 tons. Built, New England, 1765. T. Rowe.

During the Napoleonic wars, the depredations of French and American privateers added considerably to the normal rigours of the North Atlantic voyage, and some indication of the risks involved is gained from the fact that the marine insurance rate for the Newfoundland voyage reached as high as twentyfive guineas per cent and, in isolated instances, the risk became uninsurable. The merchant-men of those days, ~~even when~~ carried a fair armament and,

even when not under convoy, were frequently able to put up a successful fight against these marauders. In 1781, the ship QUAKER, Captain Evans, of Liverpool, arrived at St. John's, Newfoundland, with an American privateer of 13 guns which he had captured en voyage, and on his passage to Newfoundland in the autumn of that year the QUAKER encountered a French 44 gun ship, exchanged a broadside with her, and got clear away by sheer sailing ability after a chase of twelve hours. At the same time, the Liverpool privateers also busied themselves in harassing the French trade with Newfoundland. In September, 1778, the LADY GRANBY, owned by the Marquis of Granby and Nicholas Ashton (of Woolton Hall), brought into the Mersey a French snow, LE BON CHRETIN, loaded with fish and oil from Newfoundland, while the DRAGON, privateer, 112 tons, 14 guns, 75 men, took two ships of the enemy, bound with fish from that Colony. The story of these Liverpool corsairs is told by Gomer Williams in his LIVERPOOL PRIVATEERS.

In 1801, the following vessels were employed in the Newfoundland-Liverpool trade:-

ABBY	brig	T. Brinton, master.	154 tons.
		Built, America, 1774	
		Owner: Kirkpatrick.	

ACTIVE, brig	W. Wilding, master. 127 tons. Built, Bermuda 1789. Owner: M'Burnie & Co. Armament: 16 six pounders.
AURORA, brig.	Townsend, master. 154 tons. Built, Teignmouth, 1787 Owner: T. Rowe.
NYMPH, brig	Nicholson, master. 143 tons. River-built, 1788. Owners: Preston & Co.
PEGGY, brig	Lumley, master. 200 tons. Built, Whitehaven 1780. Owner, Hayston. (Captured 1802).
ST. JOSEPH, brig	Cooper, master. 90 tons French Prize by capture 1800. Owner: Marsden. Armament: 4 six pounders 4 four pounders
BACALHAO, ship	W. Salter, master 121 tons. Spanish Prize by capture 1796 Owner: T. Follet. Armament: 4 four pounders.
ALLISON, ship	R. Burns, master. 259 tons. French prize by capture 1795. Owner: Parr & Co. Armament: 20 six pounders.

Thus, it will be noticed that the trade during the eighteenth century was not very extensive, but the transference of the woollen industry from Devonshire to Yorkshire, the growth of the Manchester cotton trade, and the wider Colonial demand for Lancashire coal now caused Newfoundland merchants to look directly to Liverpool for their supplies. During the early years of the nineteenth century, the war with France and America somewhat retarded this commerce.



Nevertheless, in 1812, some forty vessels cleared with general cargo from Liverpool for St. John's, Newfoundland, and the trade gradually expanded, despite the depredations of such notorious American privateers as the TRUE BLOODED YANKEE, which harassed the whole of the North American shipping. The Liverpool ships, however, sailed admirably equipped to meet such dangers, and the following is a typical contemporary sailing notice, taken from the MERCURY of 22nd April, 1814:

<p>For NEWFOUNDLAND  The British Ship STAR  Thomas Thompson, Master:  Burthern per register 484 tons; stands  A.1 at Lloyd's, and is a remarkably fine  vessel; copper fastened and sheathed, and  armed with 12 12-pound carronades and 4 long  9-pounders; she is now ready to receive her  cargo, and will be despatched by the next  convoy - For rate of freight, apply to Captain  Thompson on board west side Queen's Dock, or  to</p> <p>CROPPER, BENSON and CO.</p>
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This was an unusually large ship for the trade, the average size being between 100 and 150 tons, and it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that the dimensions of the Newfoundland sailing-ships reached their peak, i.e. about 400 tons. A hundred years ago the trade was conducted almost entirely by brigs of about 150 tons.

After the close of the Napoleonic wars, the sailings from Liverpool increased, until, in 1835, they reached seventyfive departures in one year, with almost as

many arrivals from Newfoundland. Meanwhile, a number of merchant firms in the Colony found it necessary to establish branches at Liverpool, and such well-known local names as Bowring, Bulley, Job, etcetera were entered in the annals of Liverpool. The following list of firms shewing the number of vessels entered outwards from the Mersey has been compiled from the newspapers of 1838:

Graham and Taylor	12	vessels
Job, Bulley & Co.	<del>4</del> 3	"
Ferris, Butler & Co.	4	"
W. Tarbet	3	"
T. & W Earle	2	"
J. Robertson	2	"
R. Alsop	2	"
G. Brown	1	"
T. & J. Brocklebank	1	"
Harrison & Ridley	1	"
W. W. Bulley	1	"
J. G. Oughterson	1	"
J. Glynn & Sons	1	"
Eschelly, Rowett & <u>Co</u>	1	"

36 vessels.

The largest craft was the ship BRITISH TAR, <sup>266 tons</sup> loaded by G. Brown, and the smallest the schooner CHARLOTTE, <sup>5 tons</sup> from Eschelly Rowett and Co. Below is a typical sailing notice, taken from Gore's Advertiser of February, 1835:

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA  
To sail from 1st to 8th of March  
for ST. JOHN'S, Newfoundland.  
The fine, new fast-sailing A.1 Brig  
VELOCITY,  
Thomas Blackstone, Master; 145 tons register; has  
room for a few tons freight, and good accommodat-  
ion for passengers. For freight or passage, apply  
to the Master, on board, Queen's Dock, or to  
BENJ. BOWRING  
32 King Street.

During the first half of the century, these brigs, which constituted the sole communication between Liverpool and Newfoundland for mails and passengers, were chiefly Colonial-built, being despatch<sup>ed</sup> in the first instance to Liverpool for sheathing and fitting. Their voyage was particularly hazardous, and a glance through contemporary newspapers reveals numerous disasters and founderingings. The island of Newfoundland for almost a century has been designated "the graveyard of the Atlantic", and hundreds of well-found ships and their crews met a terrible fate upon its rocky coasts or in the ice-belt in the days before the Merchant Shipping Acts were introduced. Here is a description of the loss of the ship LADY OF THE LAKE, in 1833, given by one of the passengers: "The number of passengers and crew on board was 231 souls, and about five o'clock on the morning of the 10th May, the ship came to the edge of a large field of ice, about 250 miles east from Cape St. Francis. The Captain, expecting to make his way through, held on until about eight o'clock when, finding the ice to thicken so as to impede his progress, he put about, and had nearly returned to the edge of the ice when, about half past nine, the vessel had three timbers of her starboard bow forced in by a piece of ice, and the water rushed in so violently that in 20 minutes she sank. When

the state of the vessel was known, the Captain is said to have lost all presence of mind, and to have made no further exertion for her preservation. The mate used every effort to stop the leak and, finding all fruitless, he ordered the boat to be lowered, when the rush was so great that she swamped and righted, and swamped again, when numbers perished. The third time about thirty persons, including the Captain, got in and succeeded in leaving the vessel. In the meantime the mate and one seaman succeeded in getting some beef and a compass into the stern boat, which put off, numbers getting in, and she had not proceeded far when the vessel turned over in the water. The manner in which those remaining in the boats were picked up is already told, to which we may add that when the long boat fell in with the wreck of the HARVEST HOME, the 18 men left by her on it, finding a boat, lowered it, and were ultimately rescued by the MESSENGER, of Torquay, with the exception of five who were trying to follow the captain from the wreck. Twelve were saved in the long boat, 8 in the stern boat, 13 in the boat of the HARVEST HOME, and one picked up by the LIMA. Total 34 saved, and 197 perished."

Another casualty of the same year was the brig Martha, Captain John Sewill, owned by Peter Ditchbourne, of Liverpool. The MARTHA struck the ice at 4 p.m. on 10 May, when 290 miles from the Newfoundland coast, and

she sank at 5 p.m. The lower ~~beam~~ bow post was stove in and part of the ~~beam~~ bow plank. It proved impossible to prevent the vessel's sinking, and the crew took to the boats. They ~~saved~~ some provisions and clothes and a top-gallant studding sail, with which they left the vessel, but had scarcely pulled clear of the wreck when she went down head foremost and in two minutes totally disappeared. They were on the water in the boats eight days, pulling wherever the freedom of the ice rendered that possible. According to calculations, they rowed 180 miles before clearing the ice, and then stood to sea for seven days before reaching St. John's. The captain estimated that the voyage of fifteen days in the boats was at least 600 miles. They were in a most pitiable state when they landed, being nearly starved to death. The feet of some of the crew were so swelled that they could not walk. The Newfoundland merchants, however, received them with greatest kindness, and did all possible to alleviate their sufferings. Eight vessels bound for St. John's were totally lost in the ice in that month of 1833.

While the outward voyages of these Newfoundland brigs and schooners were seldom under one month's duration, and occasionally extended over two or three months, some remarkable runs from Newfoundland to Liverpool are recorded in respect of this heavy type of craft. In July, 1833,

the brig SARAH, Blyth, master, arrived in Liverpool after a passage of 13 days. Towards the middle of the century English-built vessels conducted the trade, and sturdy but trim brigantines and schooners from the yards at Shoreham, Bridport, and Whitehaven made some record crossings of the Atlantic. By the courtesy of our Vice-President, the Honourable Sir Edgar R. Bowring, K C.M.G., I append a specification of the brig TITANIA, 220 tons, launched at Bridport in 1850, and specially constructed for the Newfoundland/Liverpool trade. She was the foreunner of a long line of vessels carrying the Shakespearian nomenclature which characterised the Bowring ships in the Newfoundland trade. The voyage was really a triangular run, from Liverpool to St. John's, Newfoundland, with general merchandise, thence with **codfish** to Brazil or the West Indies, and on to Liverpool with cotton, sugar etc., and a reverse service was operated from Liverpool to Brazil with cargoes of general merchandise, thence to Newfoundland with rum, molasses etc., and from Newfoundland to Europe with codfish, codoil, sealskins and sealoil. These vessels traded with remarkable regularity and became known for their excellent sailing qualities. In 1854, the iron ship was introduced, when the HERMIONE, 435 tons, was launched for Bowrings at the yard of Cato, Miller and Co., Liverpool. Long after the inauguration of steamship communication between this port and Newfound-

land, brigantines and schooners continued the trade, down to pre-war days. So familiar were they to Liverpolitans that they became known colloquially as "the Newfoundland fish-boxes". among the dock-front fraternity.

Here are a few rapid passages:-

1887	ADAMANTINE	barquentine, 235 tons.	
		St. John's/Liverpool	13 days.
1888	SPARK	schooner, 197 tons	
		St. John's/Liverpool	13 "
1890	DUNURE	barkentine, 198 tons.	
		St. John's/Liverpool	12 days.
1894	IMOGENE	schooner, 203 tons	
		St. John's/Queenstown	11 days
1904	CARPASIAN	barquentine, 299 tons.	
		Cape Broyle/Bowling	12 days.
1905	CORDELIA	iron barque, 598 tons.	
		St. John's/Glasgow	12 days.

Until the introduction of steamship communication between this country and Newfoundland, these little vessels provided the only means of passenger transport to and from that Colony, and it will be noted that the passages above-mentioned were quite equal to those of the steamships.

In 1857, the first steamship service between Newfoundland and Liverpool was inaugurated, when the North Atlantic Steam Navigation Company put on the berth the steamers CIRCASSIAN and KHERSONESE, each 2400 tons. The agents here were Weit, Cochrane and Co., and at St. John's, Messrs Bowring Brothers. The cabin fare to Newfoundland was sixteen guineas, and the third-class fare seven pounds. This line, however, was short-lived, and a few years later the Allan Line commenced a service which they retained until

they merged with the Canadian Pacific Railway, when the Newfoundland service was taken over by the Furness Line. During the 'nineties, the Bowring firm also operated a service, an adjunct <sup>of</sup> their Red Cross Line which, for some fifty years, had provided the steamship communication between Newfoundland and New York. Today, with the exception of occasional cargo sailings from London and the Continent, Liverpool affords the only steamship connection between Europe and the island, and the trade is cared for by two modern steamships of about 6,000 tons, a vast advance on the little passenger-carrying brigs and brigantines of last century.

Liverpool is thus more closely associated with the Colony than any other British city or port, and although the annual trade cannot be described as immense, ~~xxxx~~ when the aggregate cargo tonnage of the Mersey is considered, it is nevertheless regular and appreciable. The Colony has passed through many vicissitudes owing to fires, storms, and financial crises, but Liverpool ~~merchants~~ have ever been ready at hand with generous help for the island. The fire of 1846, when the city of St. John's was burnt out, resulted in an immediate gesture of relief from local merchants; and again, in 1892, ~~when~~ fire destroyed the Newfoundland capital, Liverpool merchants led by the late Sir William B. Bowring and Mr. Thomas R. Job, raised



thousands of pounds for relief of the sufferers, and they loaded the steamer ~~BAR~~CELONA with goods for their use. Certain Liverpool family names, owing to an excellent tradition of public service and philanthropic endeavour in the island, are perpetuated there, and it would seem that their century-old associations with Newfoundland are likely to be continued by successive generations gifted with mercantile enterprise, for this is a trade in which the industrial combine has not been able to crush out the spirit of private enterprise. In recent years, the economic situation in the island has certainly been most depressing, but the sturdy Newfoundlander, once he appreciates his ills, and if left to his own devices, has a happy knack of rapidly overcoming physical and financial misfortunes, and all he needs today is that sympathetic encouragement and co-operation which is the basis of all true and lasting commerce. In this, Liverpool has played and still continues to play its part.

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PARTICUIARS of the Brig TITANIA.

Measurements according to Register dated 11th October, 1850

Length from inner part of Main Stem to }  
fore part of Stern Post aloft } 101-8/10

Breadth Midships..... 20-3/10

Depth of Hold at Midships..... 13-5/10

Measurement 220-1994/3500 tons

Builders' Measurement:-

Length from fore part of Stem Head) F. I.  
aloft to after part of Stern ) 101. 6  
Post below or keel fore & rake. )

Breadth extreme..... 22. 9½

Depth of Hold..... 13. 6.

Measurement 242 Tons.

Length of Spars of  
Main Mast Deck to Trussel Trees.....35' 0"  
Fore Mast " .....32' 6"  
Head of Main Mast..... 8' 0"  
Head of Foremast..... 7' 6"  
Main Boom, extreme.....48' 0"  
Main Gaff " .....32' 0"  
Main & fore Topmasts extreme.....27' 6"  
Yard arms..... 2' 6"  
Main & Fore Yard..... 43' 0"  
Topsail Yards .....34' 0"  
Topsail Yard Arms..... 2' 0"  
Royal Yards.....19' 0"  
Topgallant Yards.....25' 0"  
Topgallant Yard Arms..... 1' 6"  
Bowsprit (out).....17' 0"  
Jib Boom out.....15' 0"  
Royal Masts.....10' 0"  
Pole..... 6' 0"  
Flying Job Boom..... 8' 0"  
Top Gallant Masts.....14' 0"

MEMORANDA:

Chains & Anchors.  
"

Bower Chain 90 fm 1-3/16 inch  
Ditto 90 fm 1-1/16 "

MEMORANDA (continued)

Best Bower 12.1.24      Mooring Chain  $5/8$  inch  
 Second Bower 11.P.7      Stream Anchor 7.1.9.  
 Third 10.3.9.      Kedge 3.0.1.

charged 20s/- per ton extra for delivering at Bridport.  
 Total weight of Chains and Anchors 9 tons. 10 cwts. 2 qrs.

Lower Rigging  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inch.  
 Back Stays 6 inch  
 1 Hawser @ 7"5"4" inch 90 fathoms.  
 2 Manila Hawsers @  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inch  
 and running rigging.      Total weight 6 Tons.

Particulars of CANVAS in Sails:-

2 Fore Courses each 206.....	412 yards
2 Top Mast Staysails @ $66\frac{1}{2}$ .....	133
1 Main Stay Sail.....	$138\frac{1}{2}$
3 Topsails @ 191.....	573
1 Main Course.....	256
<del>1 Main Top Mast Stay Sail</del>	<del>261</del>
1 Main Trysail	$261\frac{3}{4}$
1 Jib	$139\frac{3}{4}$
1 ditto	$124\frac{3}{4}$
1 Main Top Mast Stay Sail	$111\frac{1}{2}$
1 " Top Gallant Staysail	84
2 Topgallant Sails	163
2 Lower Studding Sails @ 104	208
3 Topmast Studding Sails @ 70	210
1 Flying Jib	$102\frac{1}{2}$
1 Jib Topsail	$83\frac{3}{4}$
2 Royals @ $29\frac{1}{2}$	59
3 Topgallant Studding Sails @ 33	99
2 Royal Studding Sails @ 15	30
1 Skysail	$13\frac{1}{2}$
6 Tarpaulins	68
2 Boat Sails	40
1 Awning	162
	<u>3473</u> yards

Measurements of Spars taken when in Liverpool Docks  
March, 1851

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Mainmast. Keel to Deck 12 ft. Deck to Hounds 34'5"  
Mast Head 8'3" diameter. Step 15. deck 17½  
hounds 16 by 13½ and 13  
Fore Mast, keel to Deck 12 ft. Deck to hounds 31'10"  
Mast Head 8'3" diameter as above 15.17½.16  
by 13½ and 13  
Top Masts Keep to Cap 8'3" to Hounds 16 ft Mast Head 4'6"  
Top Gallant Masts keel to Cap 4'6" Cap to Hounds 10'2"  
Royal Mast Extreme 8 ft poles 3½ feet  
Royal Yards extreme 20 feet arms 11  
Top gallant yards extremem 25 ft arms 17 inches  
Topsail yards extreme 35 feet arms 2  
Lower Yards extreme 45 " " 2½  
Main Boom extreme 45  
Main Gaff " 32  
Trysail Mast " 30

Bowsprit from keel to outside knight heads 11 feet, from  
ditto to end 16ft 4 in  
Jib Boom from keel to Cap 16'2" Cap to hounds 19'10"  
Flying Jibboom 9 ft Pole 3 ft  
Whiskers 16 ft. Swinging Boom 29 feet.

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