

# Guide Me

## Design of a Looe lugger

With her distinctive twin rigs and exquisite hull, this 108-year-old working lugger displays impressive speeds for her age

BY JACK GIFFORD

**T**his month's exceptional vessel was not built as a yacht, but in light of her past two decades of use and in tribute to her sisters that have infuriated many a racing yacht, *Guide Me* is a worthy example and excellent subject matter for this series in representing the formidable, near mystical... lugger.

*Guide Me* has long been admired for her exquisite hull form. Well proportioned and elegant for a working boat, she is a credit to her builder – the famous Peter Ferris – and since her refit is in impressively authentic fit-out, even among her peers. The hulls of lug-rigged working boats can vary enormously, from slack bilge and almost wine glass stations through to full bilges and almost flat bottoms. As their hull forms vary greatly, it could be said that the only common factor shown by many of these boats is their distinctive rig. A prominent fore foot is often a common feature, but other than that, it is the powerful two-masted lug rig that sets them apart from other sailing craft.

Tales of fast luggers seem as old as time. The 50ft open boats of the East Anglian beach companies would tear up and down the shallow guts between shingle banks, with *Gloriana* being logged at more than 15 knots before the turn of the last century. *Guide Me* is no slouch, with an enviable racing record inshore, and regularly clocking 180nm-days mid-Atlantic. She displays speeds that most modern yachts of her size would be rightfully proud of and which are certainly impressive for an amply constructed 108-year-old boat.

The lines of *Guide Me* do not stand out as an exhibition of extreme features. Instead, her success stems from the elegant yet purposeful synthesis of speed and carrying capacity desired by her first owner, William Pengelly. She is truly the work of a builder at the top of his game and master of his trade. *Guide Me* bears a strong family resemblance to the Ferris line of working craft (also very successfully raced) and analysis of the design parameters and form factors shows she is not dissimilar to more contemporary classics and even more modern yachts.

Much is said about the “lifting” rig of a lugger – the free-setting fore lug, unimpeded by the mast and rigging,



The Looe lugger  
*Guide Me*

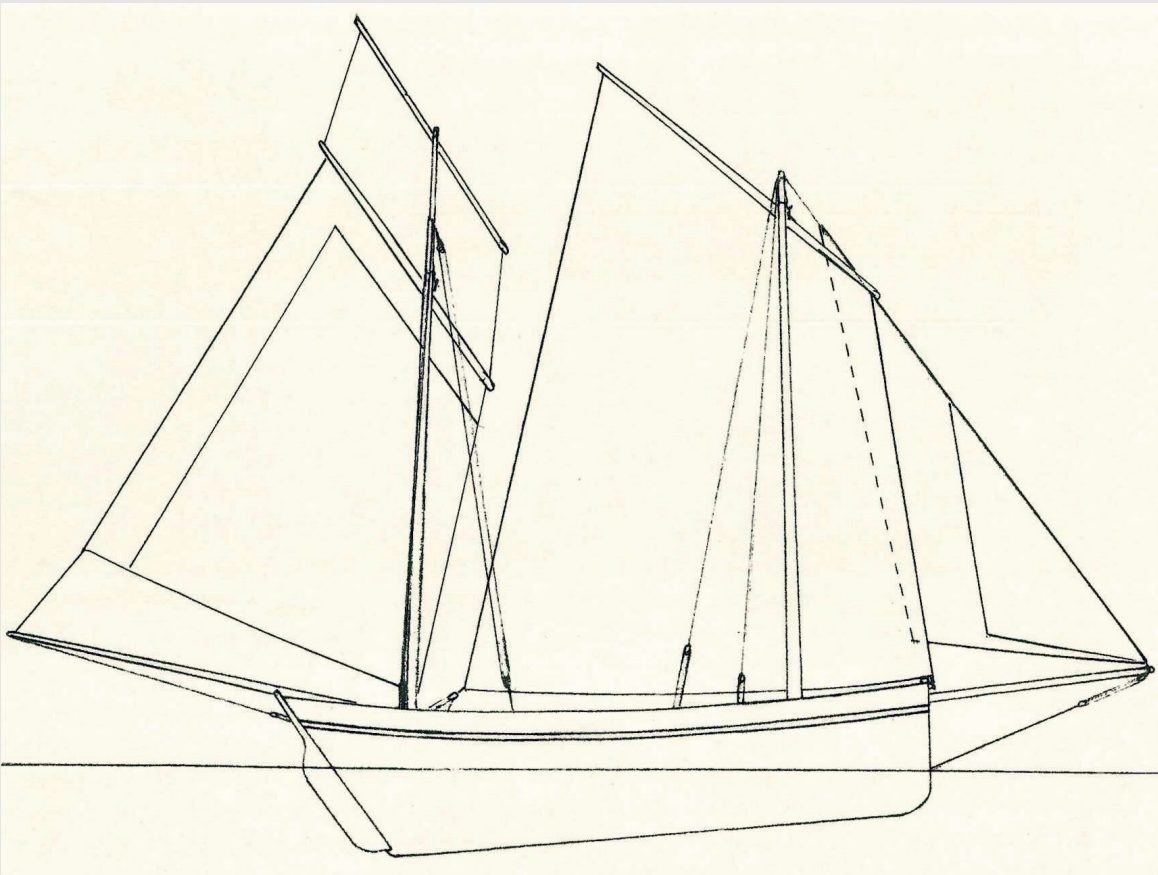
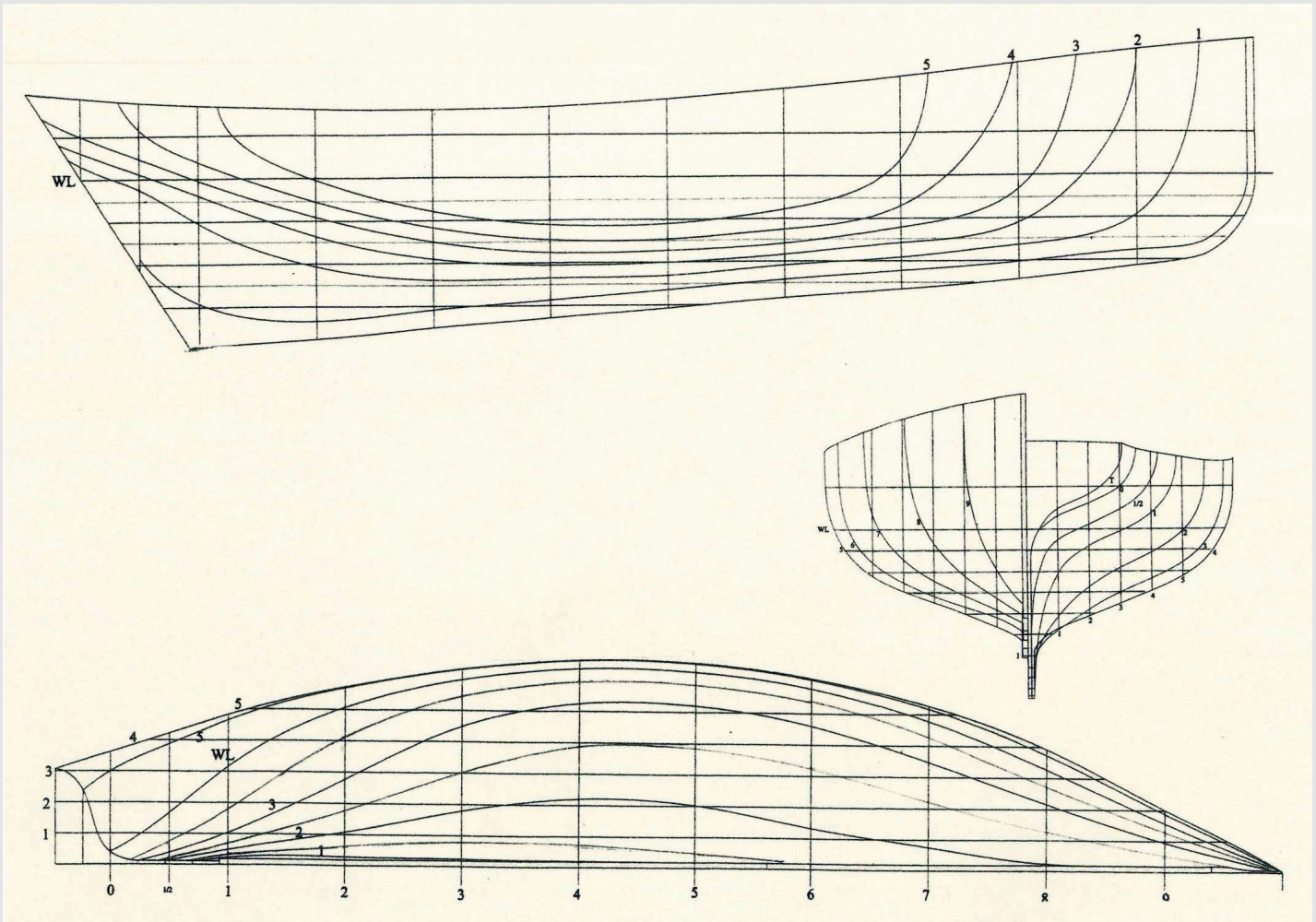
mannered under sail, luggers in particular are far more comfortable under the press of sail; the motion tends to the uncomfortable, even violent, under bare poles. The weighty spars and great form stability contribute to the phenomenon.

Lug rigs prevailed when large fishing crews were required for the arduous work of hand-hauling miles of nets, and the sailing needed to be the easy part. The feeling of coaxing a working beast into life is ever present, according to modern day lugger crews who, while pulling off impressive feats of seamanship, often with only four adults on board, no doubt yearn for a full crew of fisherman when the breeze is up.

The distinctive twin rigs and a variety of fore and aft sails (not to mention topsails) provide several modes of reducing sail, enabling balance and efficiency through the wind range. These are perhaps best summarised in the using of the main lug halyard as a weather shroud, along with only a single “Burton” to act in the stead of three permanently rigged stays. The crew must handle these bare essentials with speed, care and attention or the whole lot could be “gone for a burton”. It's not always easy going, but under way, *Guide Me*'s owner Jono Brickhill describes a gentle, purposeful motion under the press of sail in a seaway; a confidence-inspiring and almost “magical” progression.

So, look past the lugger label, the Stockholm tar, the blackened sails and vernacular forms of the West Country; *Guide Me* is a well-built boat whose design is an evolutionary exemplar of her type.

has a superbly angled lift vector in relation to her underwater body which, combined with the low centre of effort of the sail plan, serves to stabilise the boat, power her up and drive her forward. The stabilising aspect of the lug rig is especially noteworthy, as although many sailing craft can be said to be better



**LOOE LUGGER  
GUIDE ME**

DESIGNED AND BUILT  
Peter Ferris, Looe, 1911

LOD  
39ft 4in (12m)

BEAM  
12ft 10in (3.9m)

DRAUGHT  
5ft 6in (1.7m)

DISPLACEMENT  
18 tonnes

SAIL AREA  
1,600sq ft (149m<sup>2</sup>)