

J.M. SOPER/BERTHON 61 FT GAFF SCHOONER 1932/2024



Specification

VERA MARY

J.M. SOPER/BERTHON 61 FT GAFF SCHOONER 1932/2024

Designer	J M Soper & Son	Length waterline	43 ft 6 in / 13.26 m	Engine	2 x Lombardini Kohler KDI 2504 TCR/M26
Builder	Berthon Boat Company Ltd	Beam	13 ft 5 in / 4.09 m		74 hp diesels
Date	1932	Draft	9 ft 0 in / 2.74 m	Location	Italy
Length overall	72 ft 0 in / 21.95 m	Displacement	60 Tonnes	Price	EUR 1,695,000
Length deck	61 ft 0 in / 18.59 m	Construction	Teak and pitch pine on oak		

These details are provisional and may be amended

Specification

BROKER'S COMMENTS

VERA MARY is a special one for many reasons, not least because we dare anyone not to take a second look at this gorgeous classic yacht that has recently emerged from deep refit looking like new without loss of authenticity. Few schooners of this handy size were built in Britain during the 20th Century, and her design provenance and second ownership by King George V's Sailing Master on BRITANNIA, Sir Philip Hunloke, ensures that no yacht has stronger connections with sailing royalty and the era of "The Big Class". Decades of Mediterranean voyaging and chartering from the 1940s through 1980s are surely proof of concept in her design, because she was never radically altered during a period when authenticity wasn't always a watchword in vintage yacht ownership. VERA MARY is ready to enchant well into her second century.



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PROVISIONAL YACHT DETAILS

- Provisional details for a new listing

- More specs and photos to be added

Specification

REFIT/ RESTORATION

2017-2024 - CANTIERE VALDETTARO, LA SPEZIA, ITALY

- New teak laid deck
- Planking work
- Work to steel floors
- Interior reinstatement

2000-2002 - ROSTOCK, GERMANY

- Structural refit

1995 - OLD MILL CREEK, DARTMOUTH, ENGLAND BY NASH AND HOLDEN

- Structural refit

1990-1991 - HAMBLE YACHT SERVICES, ENGLAND

- Major refit/ restoration

Specification

HISTORY

J.M. SOPER & SON DESIGN NO. 195

BERTHON BOAT COMPANY BUILD NO. 432

AUXILIARY SCHOONER YACHT LAUNCHED AT LYMINGTON

[New Milton Advertiser & Lymington Times, Saturday 9th April 1932]

“A splendid auxiliary schooner yacht was launched from the Berthon Boat Building Yard, Lymington, on Wednesday morning to the design of Messrs. J.M. Soper and Son, Southampton. The yacht was built for Mr. Hamilton Fletcher, J.P., of Swanage. Its register is 36 tons, its length 61 feet, and beam 13 feet 3¼ inches, while its sail area is 1,532 square feet. The craft is fitted with a Diesel engine. Several friends of Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton Fletcher were present at the launching, and the owner's wife christened the yacht the Vera Mary.”

George Hamilton Fletcher senior had been equal principal shareholder with Thomas Ismay in the 1869 founding of The Oceanic Steam Navigation Company (White Star Line). In 1932, not long after his substantial estate was settled, Fletcher's son, also George Hamilton Fletcher (later hyphenated) of Purbeck Manor, Dorset, brought up cruising aboard his father's steam yachts, commissioned this gorgeous schooner design from Joseph M. Soper & Son of Southampton, to be built to Lloyd's 16A Classification by Berthon Boat Company at Lymington. At this time George Junior also followed his late father into membership of the Royal Yacht Squadron.

Named after his wife, Vera Mary (née Cook, whose family business, Cook, Son & Co. of St Paul's Churchyard, London was then one of the largest UK wholesale drapers) the schooner was launched into the Lymington River on the morning tide of Wednesday 6th April 1932; the beginning of a long, charmed life for this romantic yacht – a rare British schooner of this size and period.

Although conceived as a comfortable fast-cruiser, ever since the phenomenal straight line speed reputation of his 1893 “Big Class” cutter SATANITA, Joseph Soper's designs were known for “a good turn of speed”. From her Poole Harbour mooring, during her first four seasons VERA MARY regularly

In early 1939, after Hunloke purchased the Francis Brooks Richards designed 55 ft cruiser/racer WIND STAR, built at Portmellon, Cornwall in 1937 by Percy Mitchell, ownership in VERA MARY transferred to G.R. Wilkins of Richmond, Surrey, a member of the Royal Thames and Royal Burnham Yacht Clubs.

But the Second World War happened, and by 1947's first post-war proper edition of Lloyds Register of Yachts VERA MARY's owner was recorded as A.R. Sinclair, c/o RORC. The c/o address suggests “gone sailing”; perhaps it was Sinclair who sailed VERY MARY to the Mediterranean.

By the 1947 LRY Second Supplement, her owner was listed as Mrs Sybille M.A. Richepin-Meeking, c/o Coutts & Co., London. Of Anglo-French aristocratic origin, and perhaps better known by her middle name, Annick, her husband François Richepin's family had houses in Duarnenez, Brittany, in Switzerland, and their yachting base was at Cannes. VERA MARY became FRANICK II - presumably a play on words using their names - and seems to have remained in Richepin-Meeking ownership at Cannes into the mid-1950s.

From the mid-1960s, as HAWAITA, her owner was Englishman David K. Ellis of Bexley Heath, Kent, but she remained Mediterranean based and was most probably a charter boat. In 1975, Ellis's skipper, David Power and his wife Jennifer, became her owners and offered charters, still as HAWAITA, from Estepona and Puerto Banús on Spain's Costa del Sol into the early 1980s. Antigua Classic Regatta organiser Jane Coombs remembered this period when reminiscing in the 2024 Regatta Programme:

“Around the age of 21 I secured my first paid position as deckhand on a 65ft [sic] schooner Hawaita (apparently named for the first utterance on waking hungover after the post purchase celebration!) For that season in the South of France, I had no bunk when on charter so I slept in the bowsprit net and on the galley floor if it rained but I was utterly in heaven.”

participated in Parkstone Yacht Club points series, Royal Ocean Racing Club (RORC) races in the English Channel, and, of course, at Cowes Week.

In May 1935 she was dressed overall at anchor in Studland Bay as part of the local King George V Silver Jubilee celebrations, and within a year had apparently been purchased by the late King's estate as a gift to his Sailing Master on BRITANNIA, Sir Philip Hunloke. Hunloke certainly became VERA MARY's registered owner in early 1936, but Royal Wills remain secret, and this is a story that seems to have been passed down with her to gain currency around fifty years later. It's a good story and may well be true.

VERA MARY's part in BRITANNIA's July 1936 scuttling was movingly recorded by a Portsmouth Evening News reporter:

BRITANNIA IS NO MORE - SCUTTLED OFF THE ISLAND
[Portsmouth Evening News - Friday 10 July 1936]

"Britannia is no more. Somewhere off the south coast of the Isle of Wight King George's old racing cutter found a last resting place on the sea bed. In the early hours of this morning, just as dawn was about to break, she was scuttled in accordance with the late King's wish.

"Cowes received the first hint of the approach of the end when two destroyers from Portsmouth steamed into sight round Old Castle Point at about nine o'clock last evening, and took up a position near Britannia.

"One of the destroyers lowered a motor launch which made its way across the roads to the schooner Vera Mary owned by Sir Philip Hunloke, King George's sailing master.

"Four men stepped silently from the yacht. They were Sir Philip, Capt. A. B. Turner, Britannia's skipper, his son, who was mate of the Royal cutter, and Mr. F. Mason, the steward.

"At midnight Britannia left Cowes Roads for the last time in tow of the two destroyers. The old cutter thus passed in the darkness unseen, the only indication of her passage being the lights of the destroyers as they slowly moved off in an easterly direction.

"Sir Philip and the members of the crew who had accompanied Britannia on her last journey returned to Cowes early this morning and Sir Philip immediately went aboard his yacht."

It is believed that Hunloke used VERA MARY to follow the late 1930s regatta circuit, with Brixham in Devon a particularly favourite destination. He was a founder member of Brixham Yacht Club in 1937, and President during the last years of his life, 1946-1947. He was also Royal Yacht Squadron Commodore 1942-1947.

In 1982 or 1983 Rolf Menzel (Switzerland) purchased HAWAITA at Sanremo, Italy, and refitted her there. She remained Western Mediterranean based, as a charter boat and floating photo lab. It is believed to be Menzel who restored her name to VERA MARY. In 1988 she took part in the second edition of Vele d'Epoca di Imperia.

VERA MARY had enjoyed 40 years of relative obscurity in the Mediterranean, but that all changed from 1989 when she was purchased at Palma de Mallorca by one of the most famous racing sailors of the time, British Olympic and America's Cup helmsman Chris Law. She returned to England for a major restoration/ refit 1990-1991 at Hamble Yacht Services, attracting much press interest thanks to Law's reputation and the King George V / Hunloke gift story, and amid the rising clamour for reviving classic yachts. A return to the Mediterranean followed in time for the 1991 edition of La Niouarge at Saint-Tropez.

VERA MARY's 30 years of German ownership began, possibly at Dartmouth, England, in 1995. Purchased by a syndicate, she received a structural refit and return to her original gaff mainsail (for most of her Mediterranean years, and through Chris Law's ownership, VERA MARY sailed with a Bermudan/ Marconi main) at the skilled hands of Pete Nash and John Holden at Old Mill Creek prior to a new life based in the Canary Islands.

In 2000 another German syndicate took over led by Joachim Heitmann. VERA MARY's home moved north to the Baltic where she enjoyed refit work at Rostock and eventually became well known from her early 2000s home port of Kappeln on the Schlei, Schleswig-Holstein.

In her third German ownership VERA MARY returned to the Western Mediterranean where at La Spezia, Italy she has recently emerged from a major refit including receiving a new deck, and re-powering as a twin-engine/ twin-screw auxiliary, all without loss to her unique charm.

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Specification

JOSEPH MANSTON SOPER 1857-1938

He made his name - particularly with the 1893 Big Class cutter SATANITA - as in-house designer at the Southampton yachtbuilding yard of J.G. Fay & Co (later the Southampton yard of Camper & Nicholsons, now 'Shamrock Quay'), eventually becoming General Manager. In 1900 he set up to his own account - initially in London, but by 1912 back in Southampton - as a naval architect, surveyor,

and yacht broker. Although known for his fast and seakindly larger sailing yachts, a significant survivor being the steel 141 ft 3-masted schooner XARIFA, he had also specialised in improving the efficiency of steam yachts and was known in his youth as an ace small boat helmsman. A 1938 obituary noted that Soper was, "a man of very retiring disposition, his work was also his hobby."

Specification

CONSTRUCTION

- Teak 2 in / 50 mm planking above waterline
 - Pitch pine 1½ in / 38 mm planking below waterline
 - Pitch pine shelves
 - Elm keel and deadwood
 - Oak frames and deck beams
 - Galvanised iron and steel floors
 - Naval bronze fastenings, keel bolts, rivets, reinforcements
 - Teak laid deck
 - Teak and mahogany superstructure and interior joinery
-

Specification

DECK LAYOUT, EQUIPMENT, AND GROUND TACKLE

GENERAL

- New teak laid deck
- Teak coveringboards
- Teak bulwark and cap rail
- Bronze lifeline stanchions

FROM AFT

- Bronze fairleads port and starboard on taffrail on bronze chafe plates
- Raised ensign staff socket
- Sunk passarelle socket
- Brass anti chafe strips

AFT DECK

- Bronze mainsheet buffer horse
- Padeyes and ash block purchases for mainsheet
- Bronze mooring bollard cleats port & starboard
- 2 x Very large bronze mushroom vents
- Steering gear box
- Brass stern light
- 2 x Antal XT66 bronze electric mainsheet/ running backstays winches port & starboard
- Morse engine controls to starboard
- Vetus bow thruster controls
- Spectra running backstays

COCKPIT

- Teak cockpit coamings (original, but raised)
- Raw teak grating sole over aluminium
- Access under to generator
- Traditional ship's wheel aft
- Engines panel under
- Shore power socket
- Brass compass pedestal/ binnacle
- Steering compass
- Companionway to aft cabin
- Double doors and sliding hatch in cabin trunk

AFT SIDE DECKS

- 2 x Raw teak small cavel cleats port & starboard at bulwark for running backstays
- Ship's bulkhead type electric deck lights port & starboard at bulwark
- 1 x Raw teak large cavel cleat port & starboard

CABIN TRUNK

- Varnished teak uprights; laid teak on marine plywood roof
- 3 x Bronze opening ports port & starboard

- 2 x Bronze opening ports forward
- 4 x teak handrails with bronze fittings

MAIN MAST POSITION

- Single spreader main mast
- Bronze pinrails port and starboard
- All ash blocks at purchases
- Galvanised bottle screws and traditional rigging at chainplates

MID DECK

- Bronze foresail sheet buffer horse
- Ash blocks at purchase
- Liferaft stowage
- Multiple large and small raw teak cavel cleats at bulwark port & starboard

MID DECK COMPANIONWAY SUPERSTRUCTURE

- Incorporated butterfly skylight aft
- Sliding hatch
- Companionway to saloon

BUTTERFLY SKYLIGHT OVER GALLEY AND FORE CABIN

- Double drop-leaf table over
- 2 x Large bronze ventilator cowls
- Varnished teak gas bottle locker box

FOREMAST POSITION

- 2 x Pinrails at deck
- Pinrails port and starboard at chainplates
- Galvanised bottlescrews

FOREDECK

- Bronze staysail sheet track; ash block purchases
- Multiple raw teak cavel cleats at bulwarks
- Ship's bulkhead type electric deck lights port & starboard at bulwark
- Muir Thor horizontal windlass
- 2 x Warping drums; 2 x gypsies
- Bow rollers port and starboard
- Raw teak mooring cleats port & starboard
- Bowsprit and associated hardware

GROUND TACKLE

- (To be confirmed)
- 48 kg CQR anchor; c200 ft / 60 m ½ inch / 13 mm chain
- 28 kg CQR anchor; c260 ft / 80 m ½ inch / 13 mm chain

Specification

ACCOMMODATION AND DOMESTIC EQUIPMENT

DOWN 7 x STEPS FROM COCKPIT

- Sleeps 6 in 3 x cabins (8 including saloon)
- Mahogany carpentry/ white painted surfaces

- 5 x Deckhead lights
- 10 x Steps up to mid deck companionway

- Varnished pine sole

OWNER'S CABIN

- Wide single berths port & starboard
- Lockers port & starboard
- Sideboards/ chests of drawers port & starboard of companionway
- Large locker doors port & starboard (engine bays)
- 4 x Opening ports
- 2 x Oil bulkhead lights
- 2 x Electric bulkhead lights
- 1 x Deckhead light

SALOON

- L-Shaped settee to starboard
- Green leather upholstery
- Buttoned seat backs
- Drop leaf saloon table
- Settee to port
- Drinks lockers
- Hanging lockers
- 2 x Bulkhead oil lamps
- 5 x Bulkhead electric lamps

PASSAGE FORWARD

WC/ SHOWER COMPARTMENT TO PORT

- Tecma electric flush toilet
- Shower; all brass fittings
- Sink with mixer tap
- Lockers

WC/ SHOWER COMPARTMENT TO PORT

- Ship's isolator panel
- Tecma electric toilet
- Sink with mixer tap
- Walk-in shower compartment; brass fittings

GALLEY

- Top loading fridge
- Electric 4 x plate hob
- 2 x Sinks; antique brass mixer tap
- Lockers for pots; plates; food

GUEST CABIN TO STARBOARD

- 2 x Large single berths
- Lockers under
- Locker port and starboard
- 2 x Bulkhead lamps
- 2 x Deckhead lamps
- Access to anchor locker forward

Specification

RIG, SAILS, AND CANVASWORK

RIG

- Oregon pine masts and spars
- Single spreader mainmast
- Single spreader foremast

- Gaff foresail
- Fore topsail
- Boom staysail
- Jibs
- Other sails details TBA

SAILS

- Gaff Mainsail
- Main topsail

CANVASWORK

- TBA

Specification

MECHANICAL, ELECTRICAL, AND TANKAGE

MECHANICAL

- 2 x Kohler Lombardini KDI 2504TCR/M26 74 hp diesels
- Engines manufactured 2021; installed 2023
- 2 x Twin Disc Technodrive TM345 gearboxes
- 2 x 35 mm Propeller shafts
- 2 x 4-Blade JProp 22 in, 24 x 200 bronze variable pitch feathering propellers

- 2 x Mastervolt Alpha main engines alternators

ELECTRICAL

- 12 & 24 V System
- Batteries for house and engines/ generator starting
- Chargers
- Inverter
- More details TBA

MECHANICAL ELECTRICAL

- Kohler diesel generator
- (11EKOZD 60 Hz; or 9EFKOZD 50 Hz?)

TANKAGE

- Fuel
 - TBA
- Water
 - TBA
- Hot Water
 - Isotemp marine water heater
 - Capacity TBA
- Waste
 - TBA

OTHER
- Vetus bow thruster

Specification

NAVIGATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

NAVIGATION

- Steering compass
- Raymarine Hybridtouch multi function display

- Raymarine repeaters

COMMUNICATIONS

- VHF Radio
-

Specification

SAFETY

- Eurovinil Survitec Syntesy 9650 6-Person canister liferaft

- More TBA
-

Specification

OTHER EQUIPMENT

- Carbon and teak-laid folding

passarelle; bronze stanchions

Disclaimer

These particulars have been prepared from information provided by the vendors and are intended as a general guide. The purchaser should confirm details of concern to them by survey or engineers inspection. The purchaser should also ensure that the purchase contract properly reflects their concerns and specifies details on which they wish to rely.

J.M. SOPER/BERTHON 61 FT GAFF SCHOONER 1932/2024

[Specification](#)
GALLERY







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RESTORATION • CATALAN • VINTAGE YACHTS
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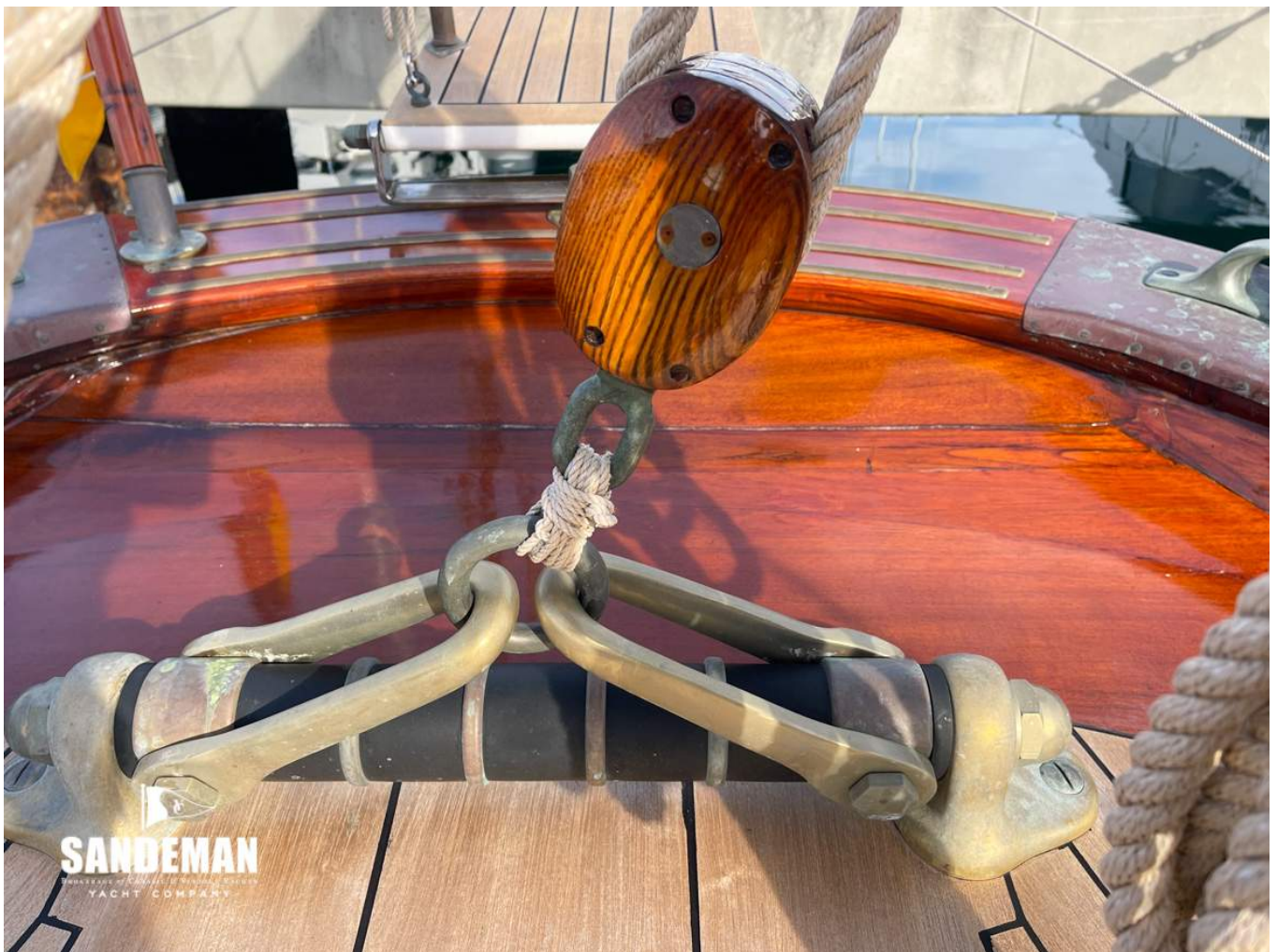
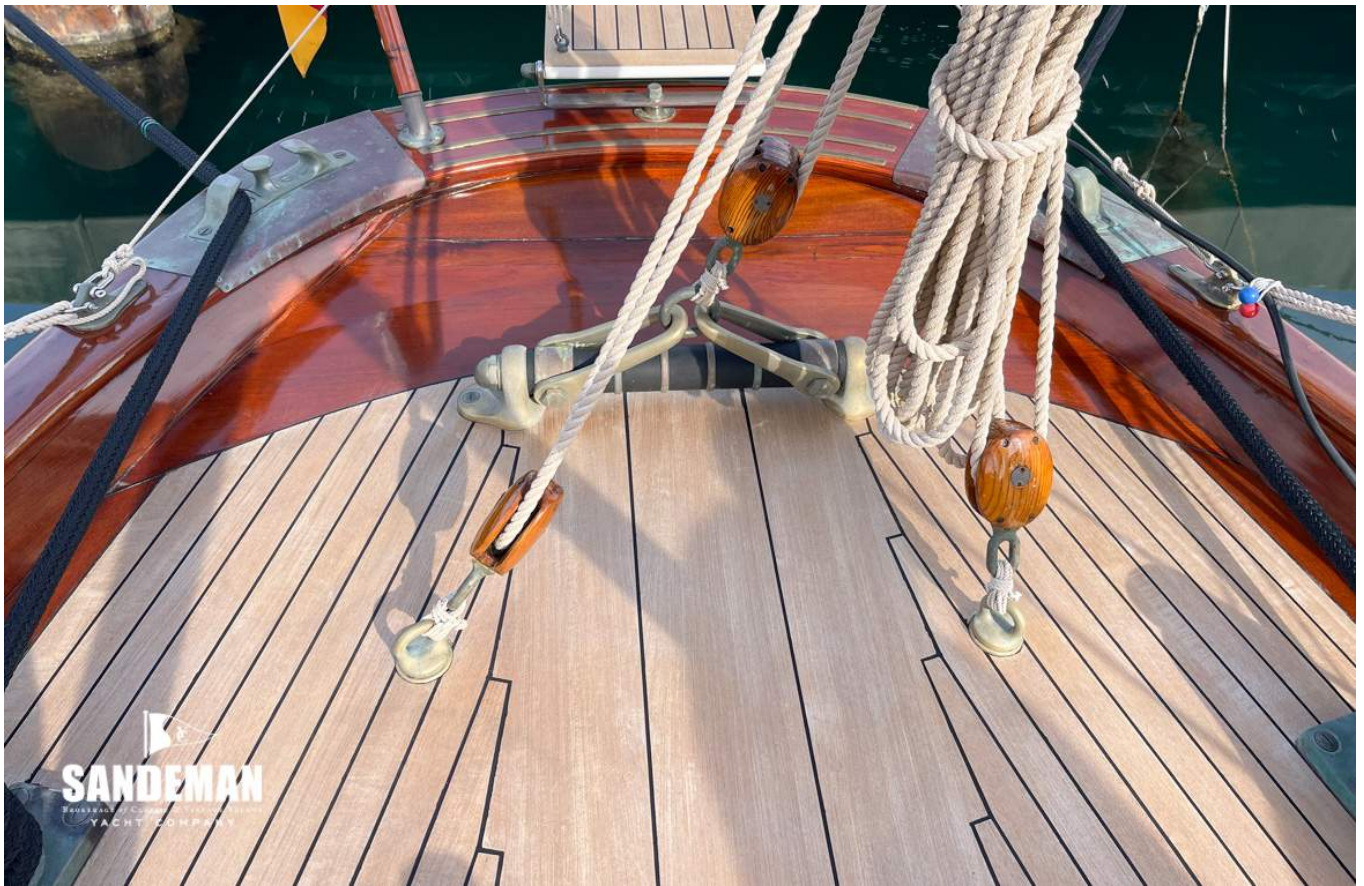



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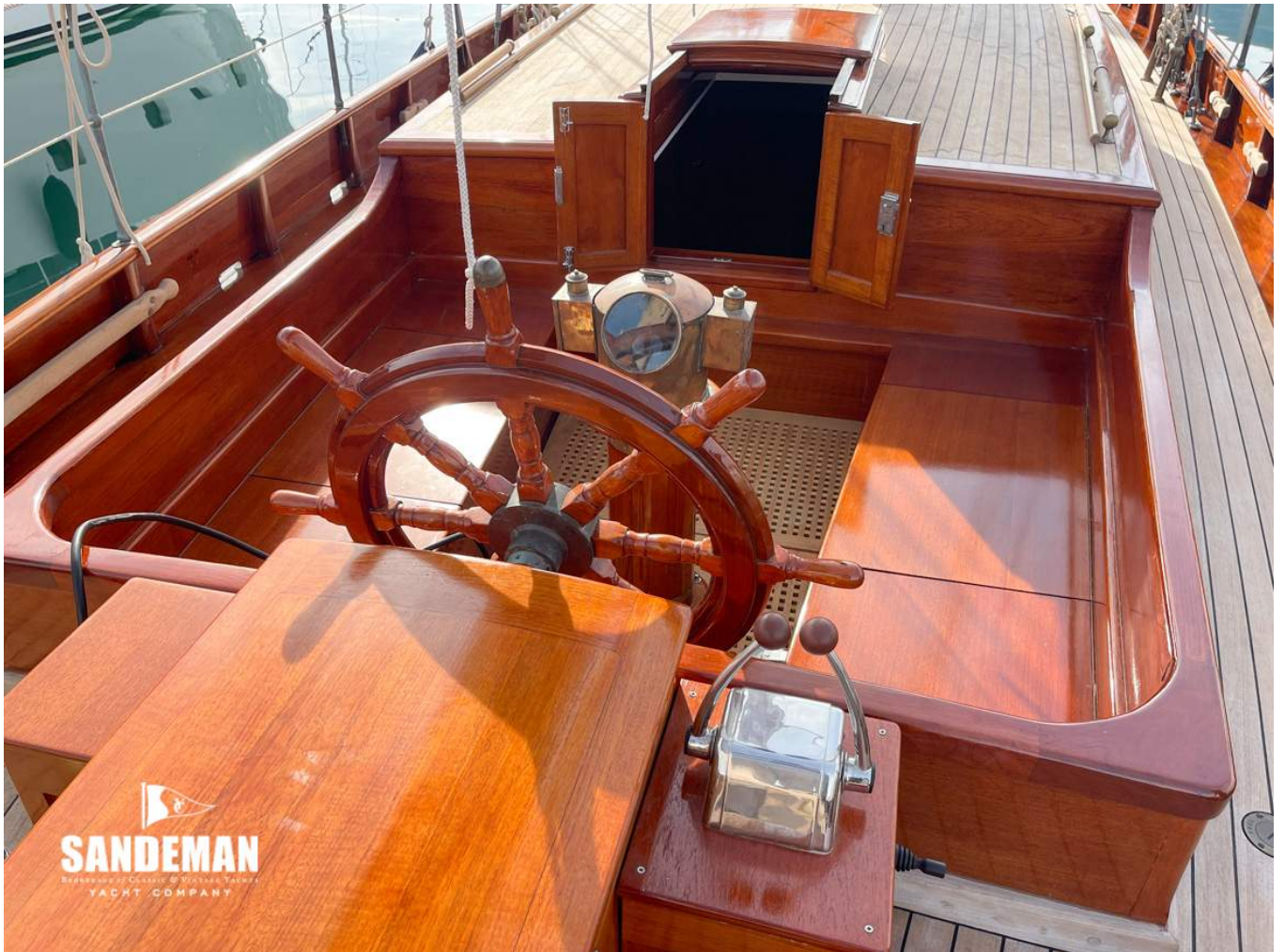
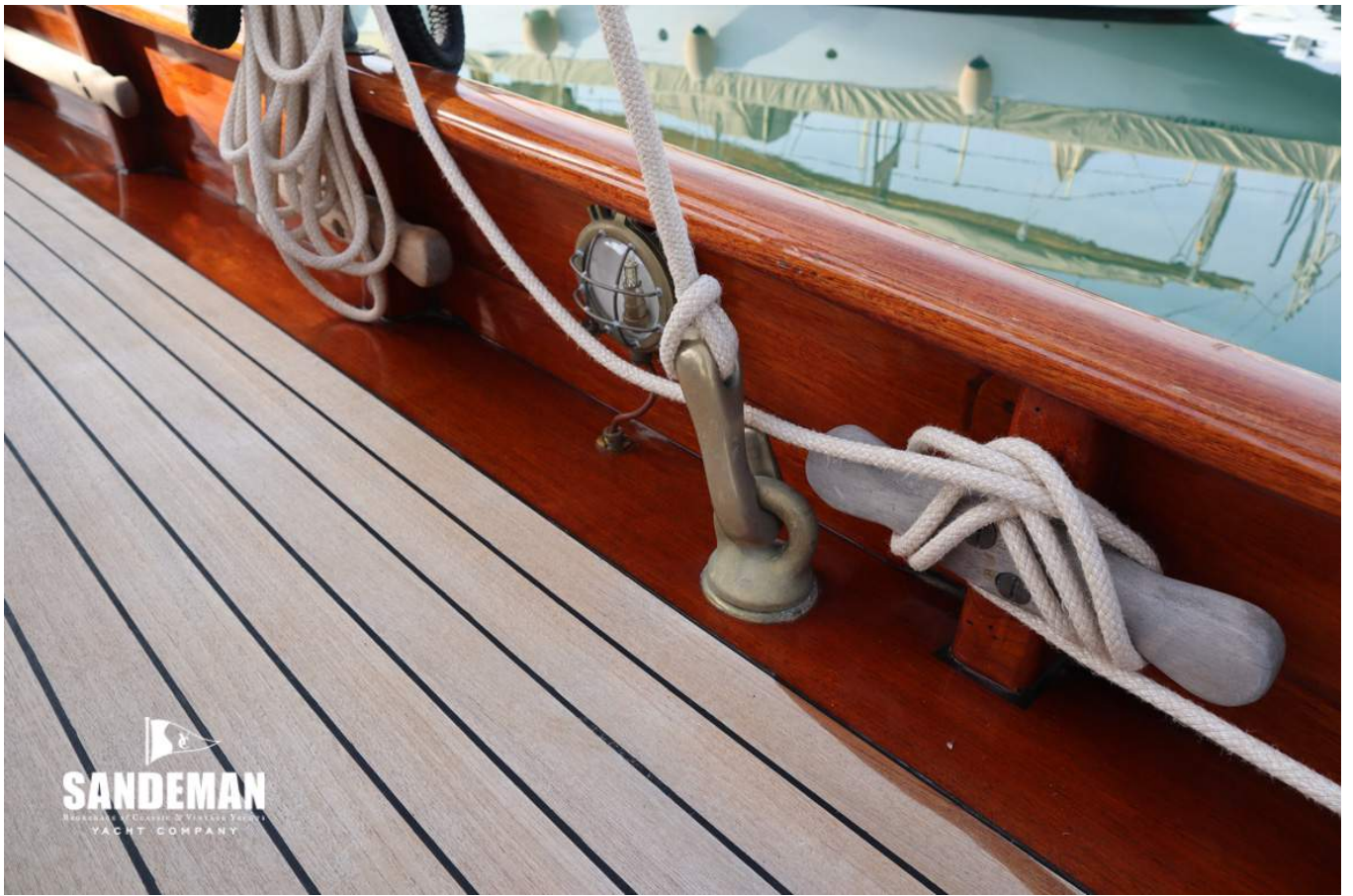



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RENEWANCE OF CLASSIC & VINTAGE YACHTS
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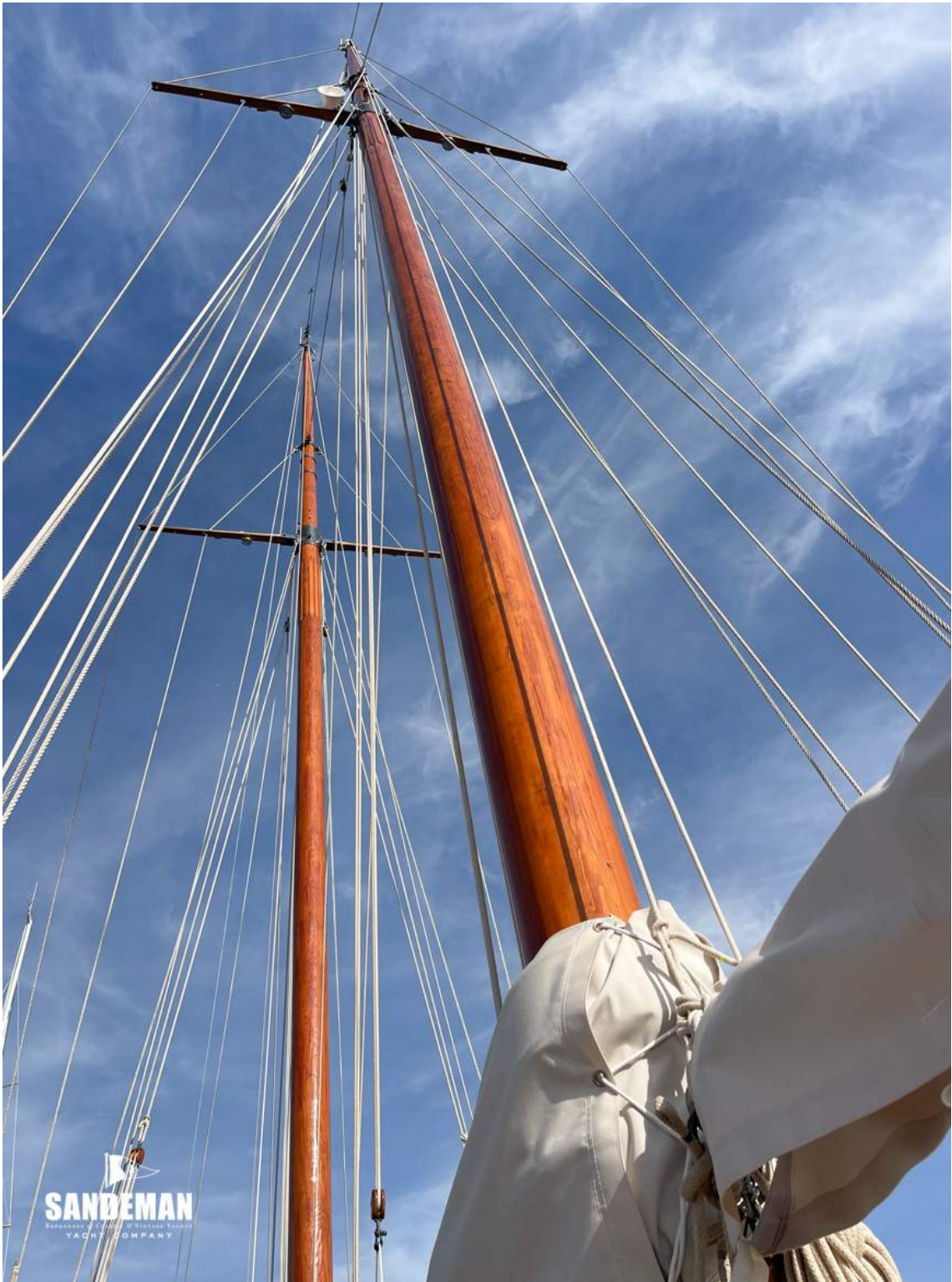




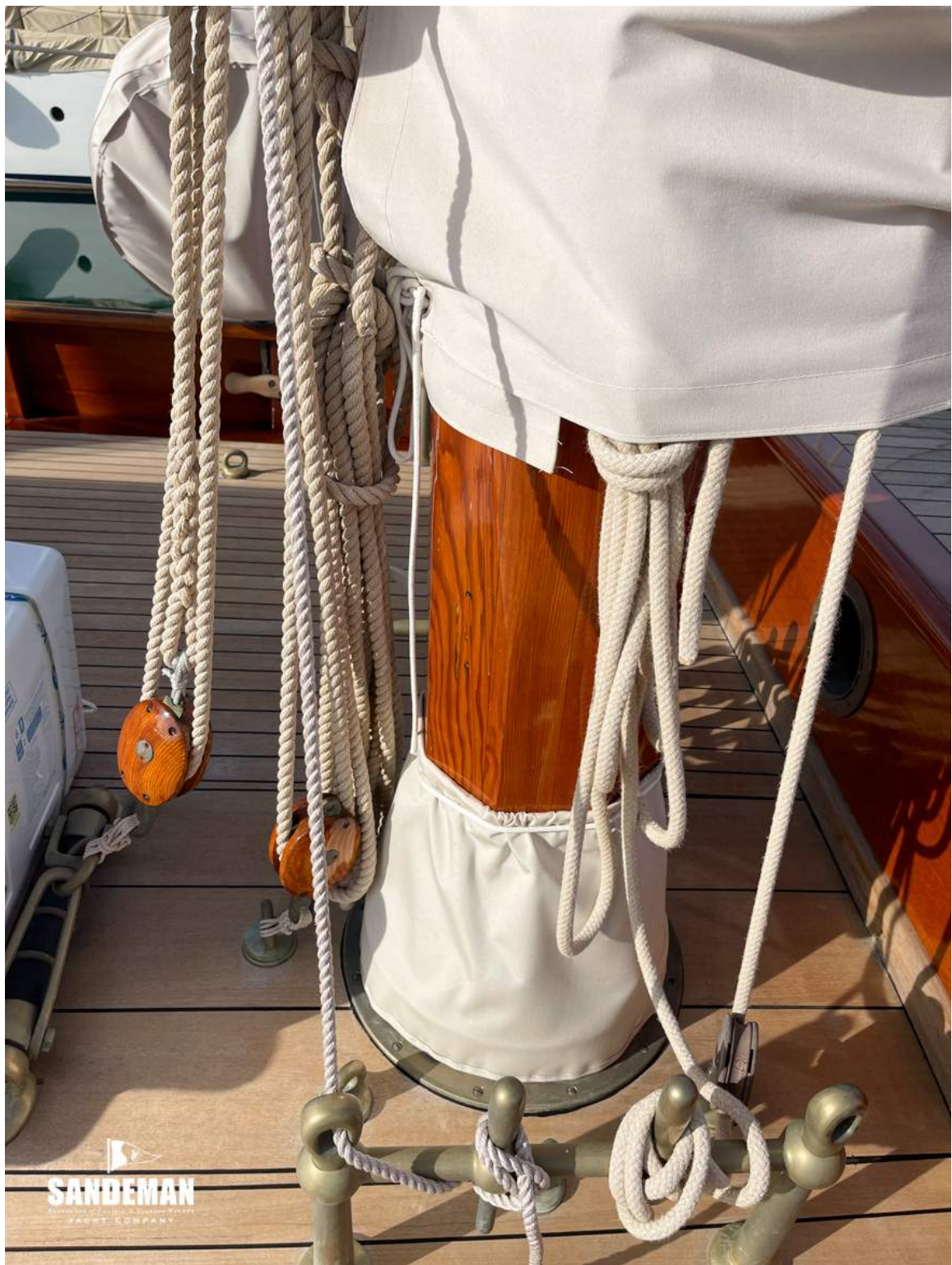


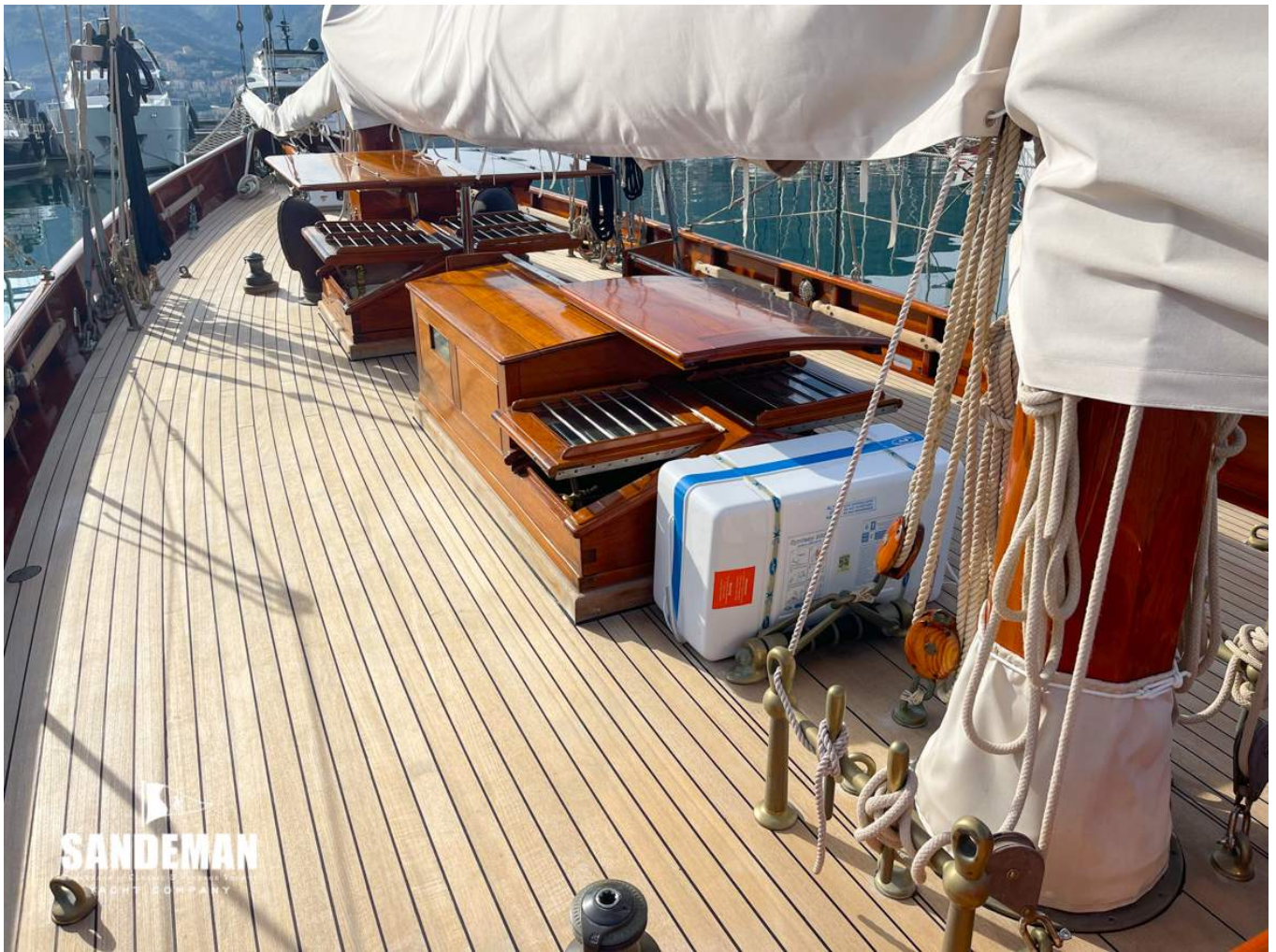


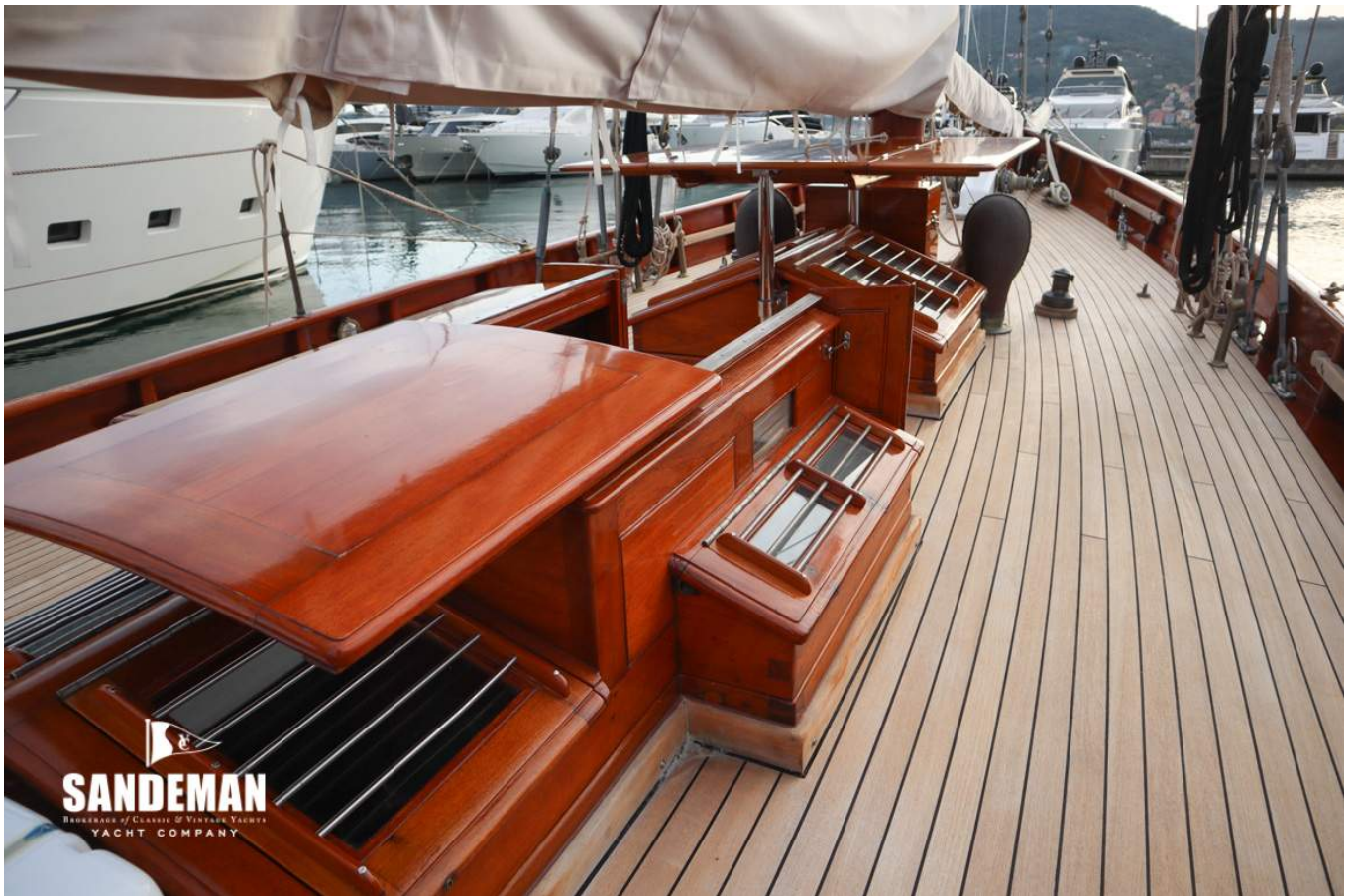

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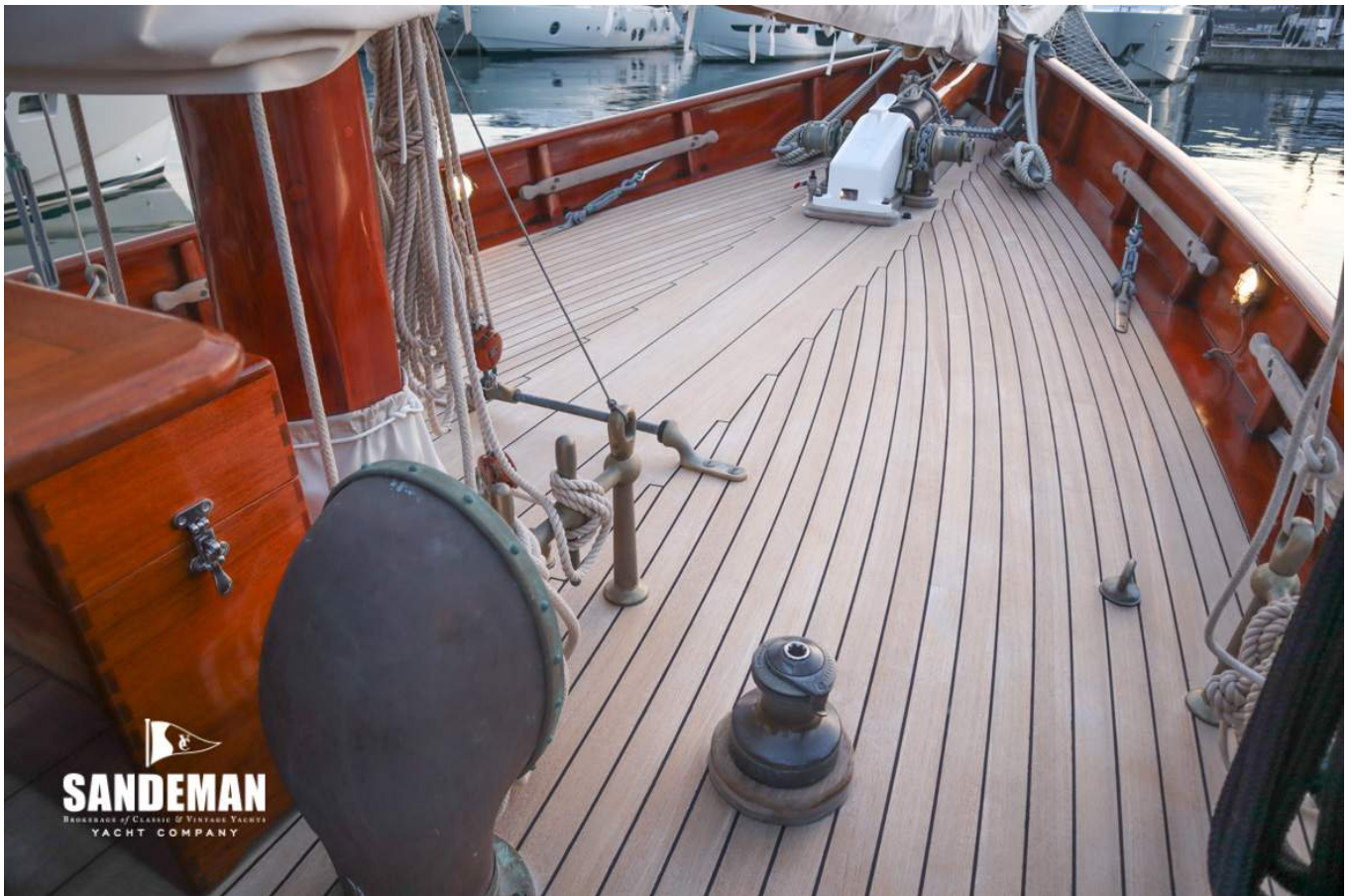


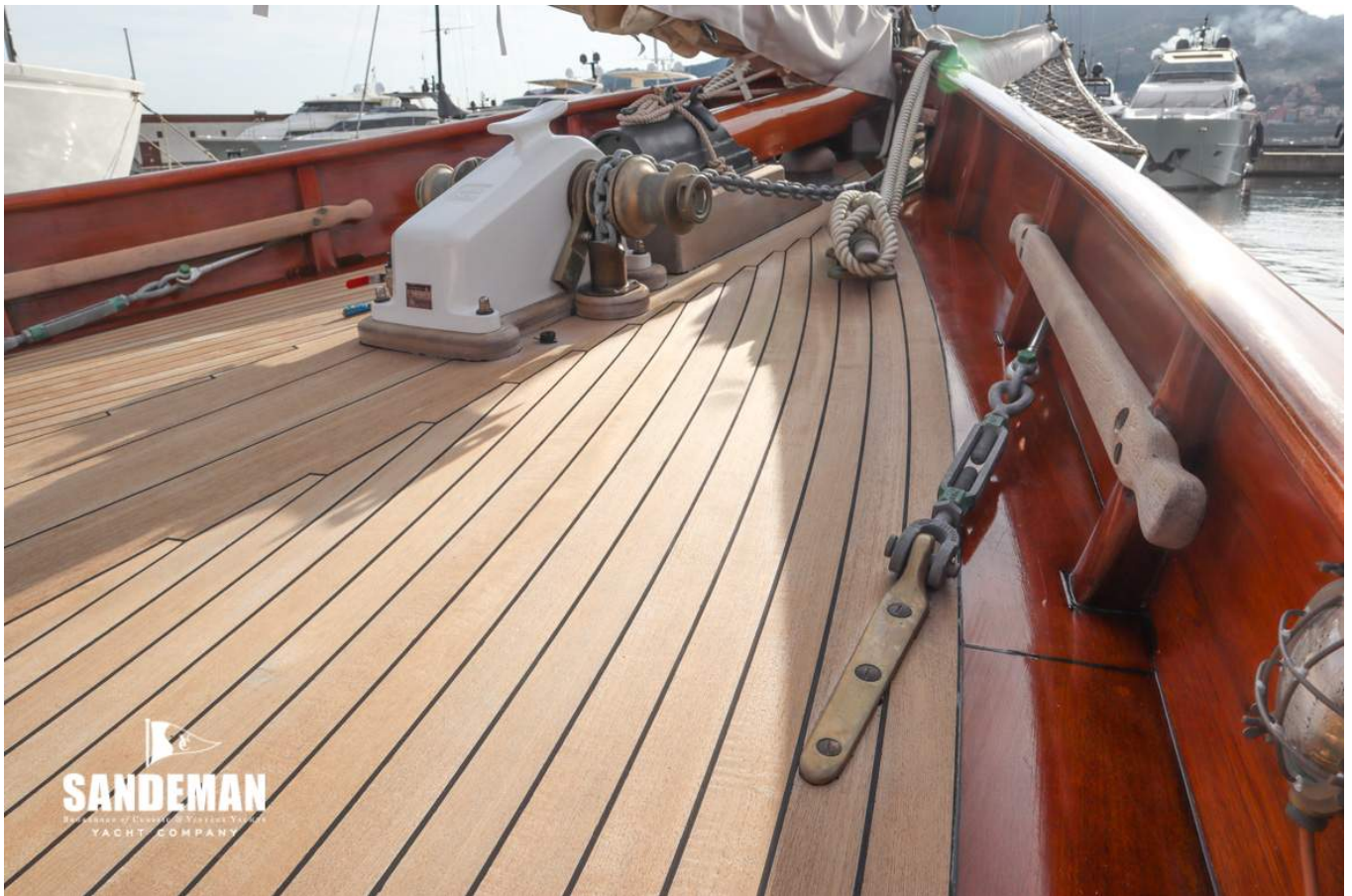










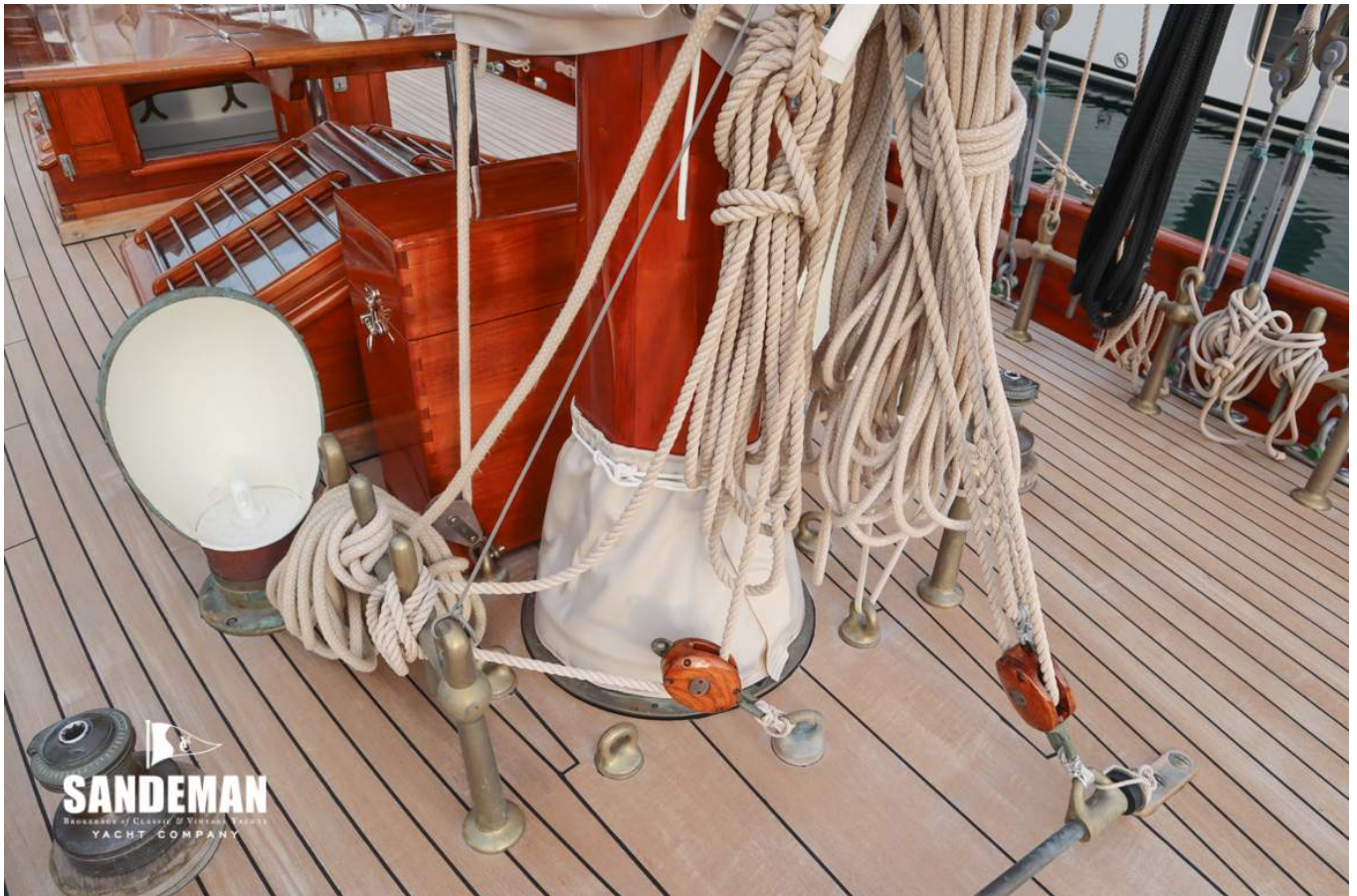
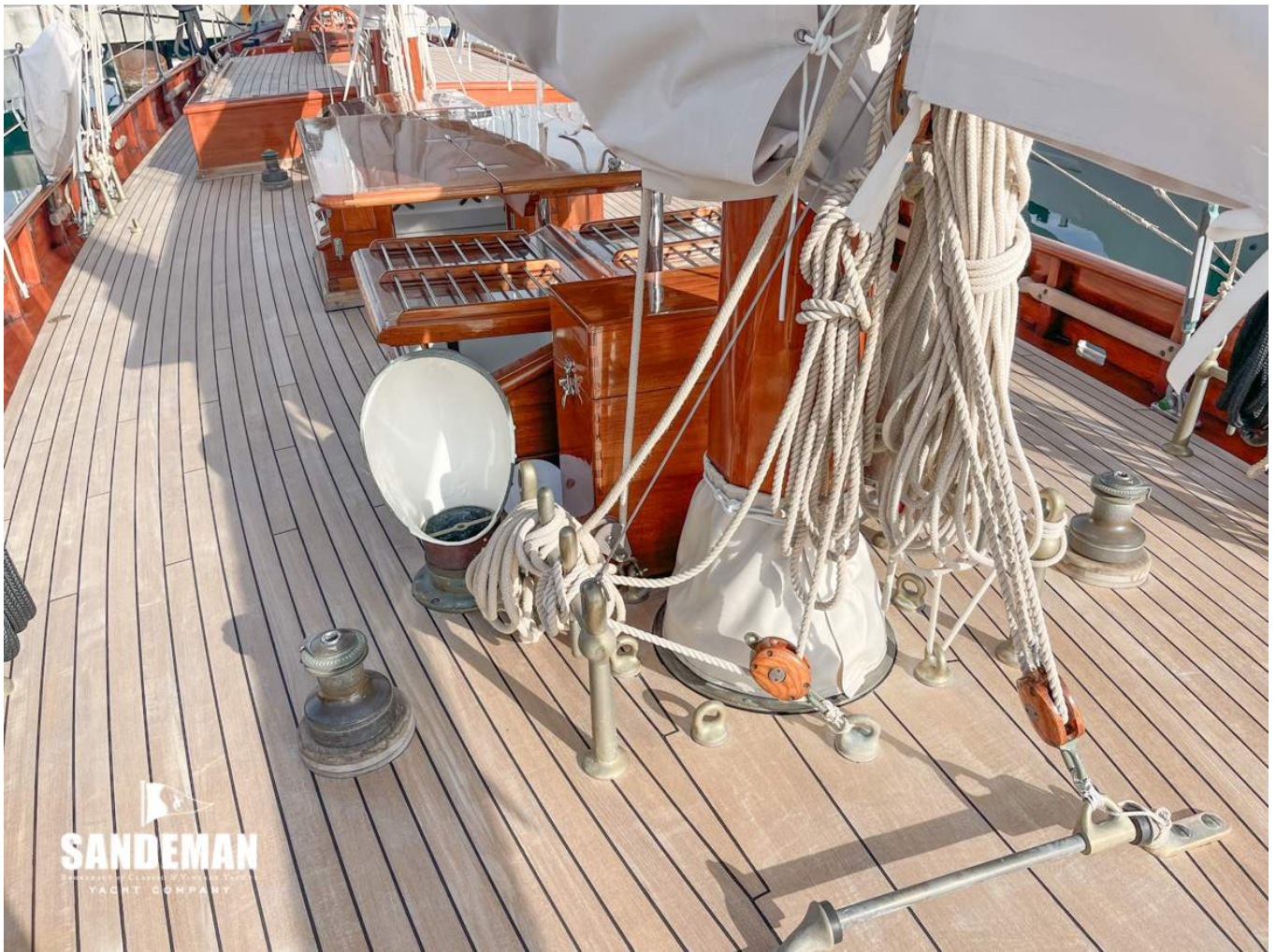


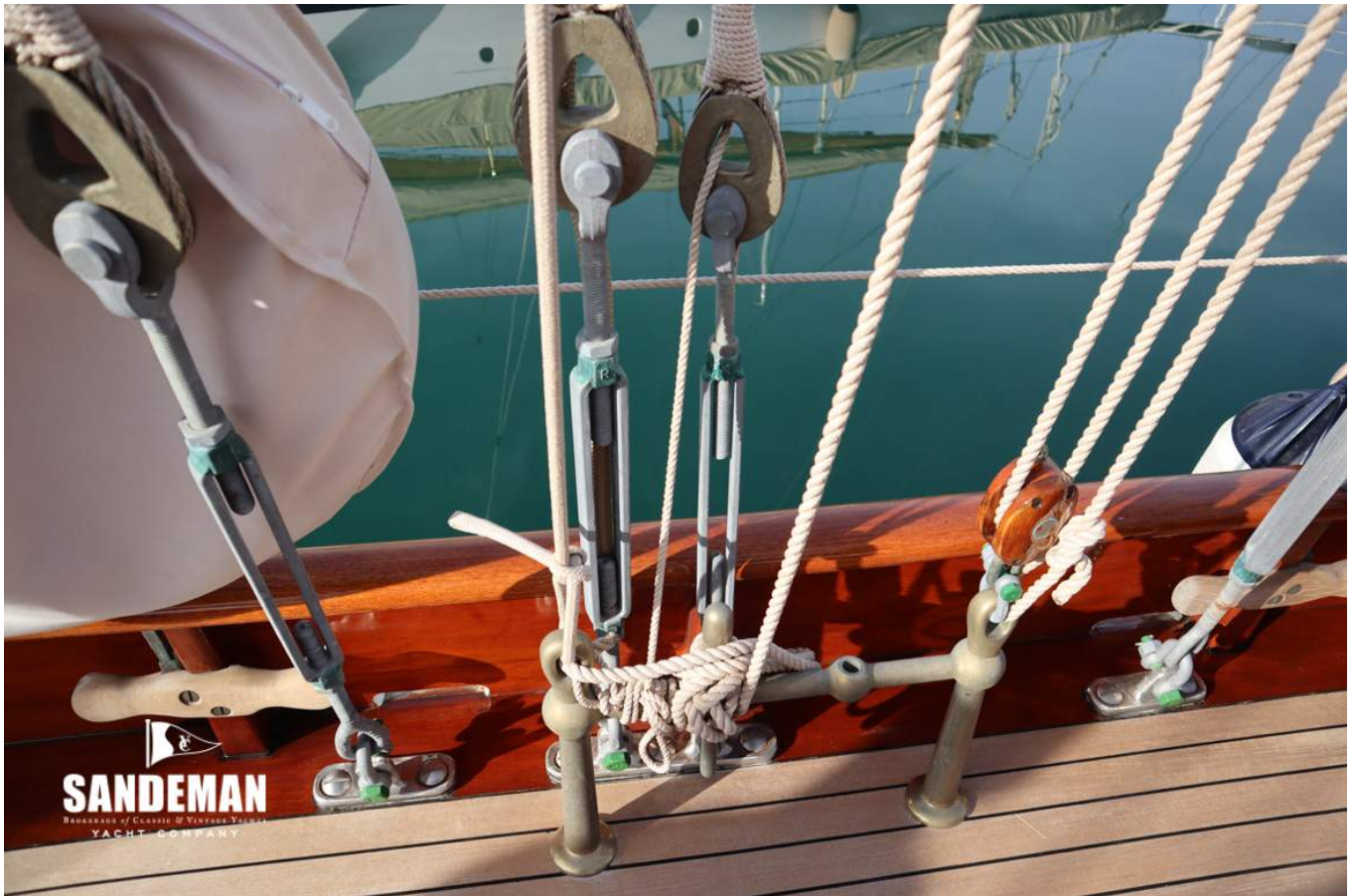
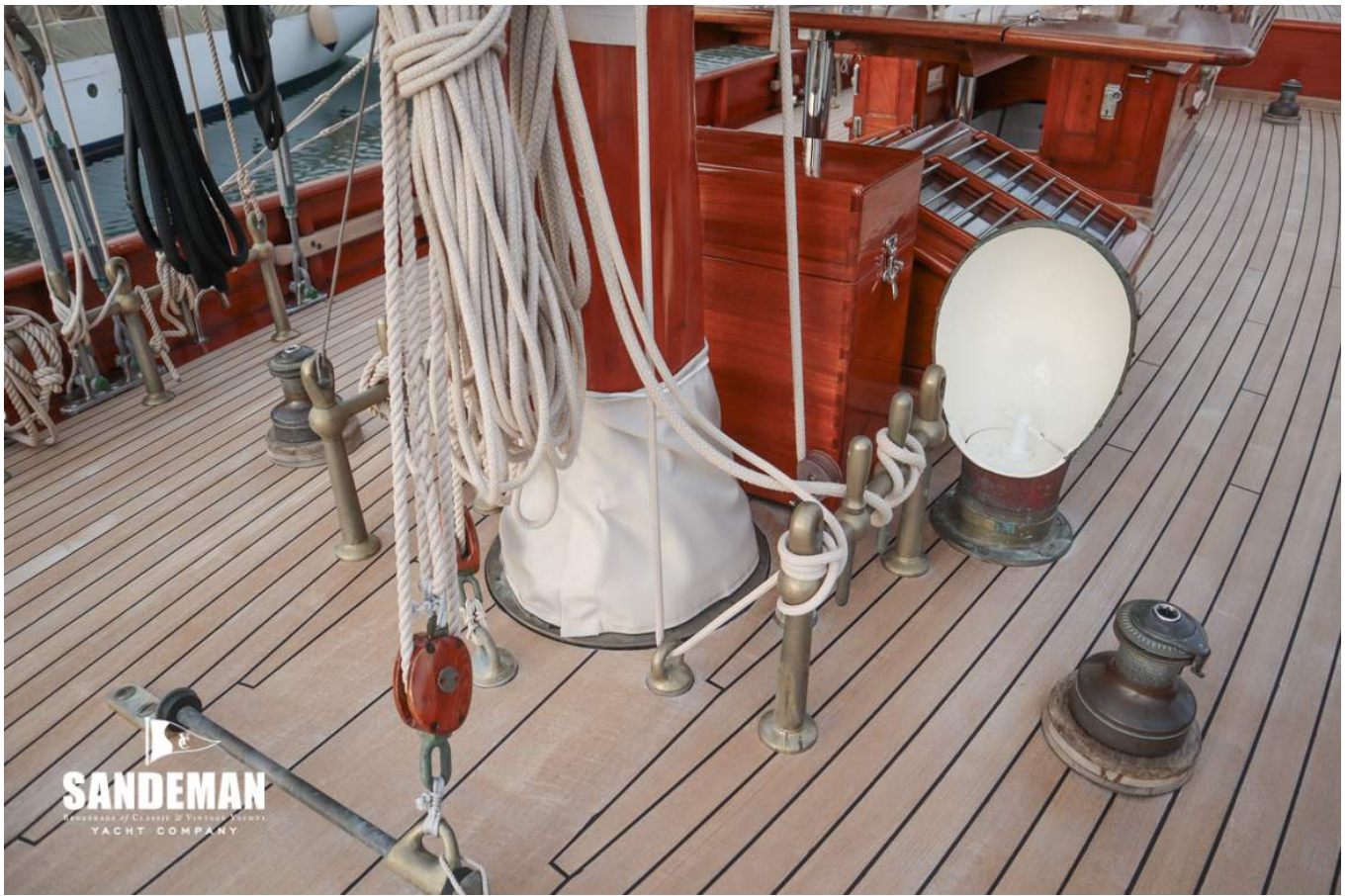


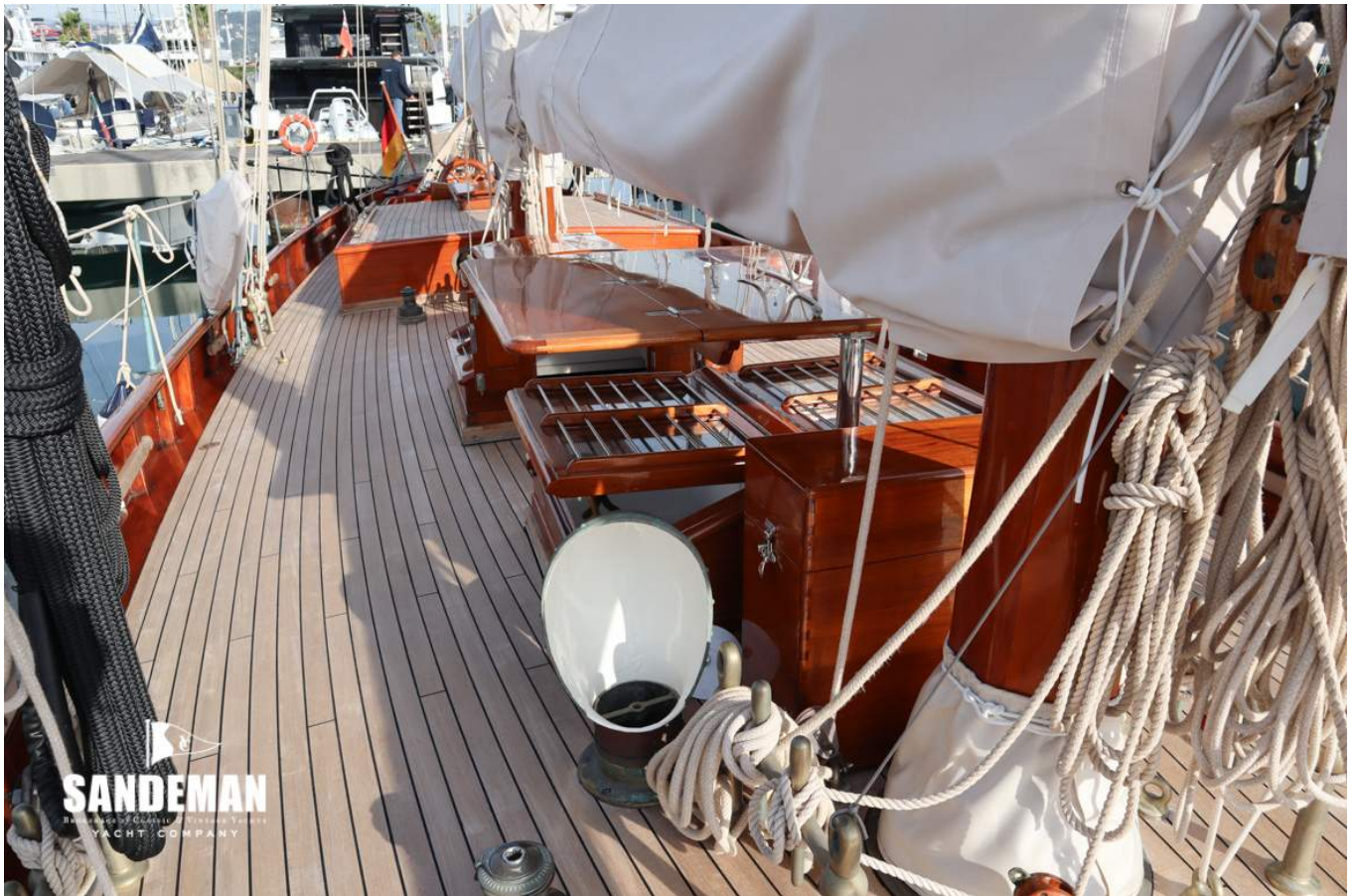








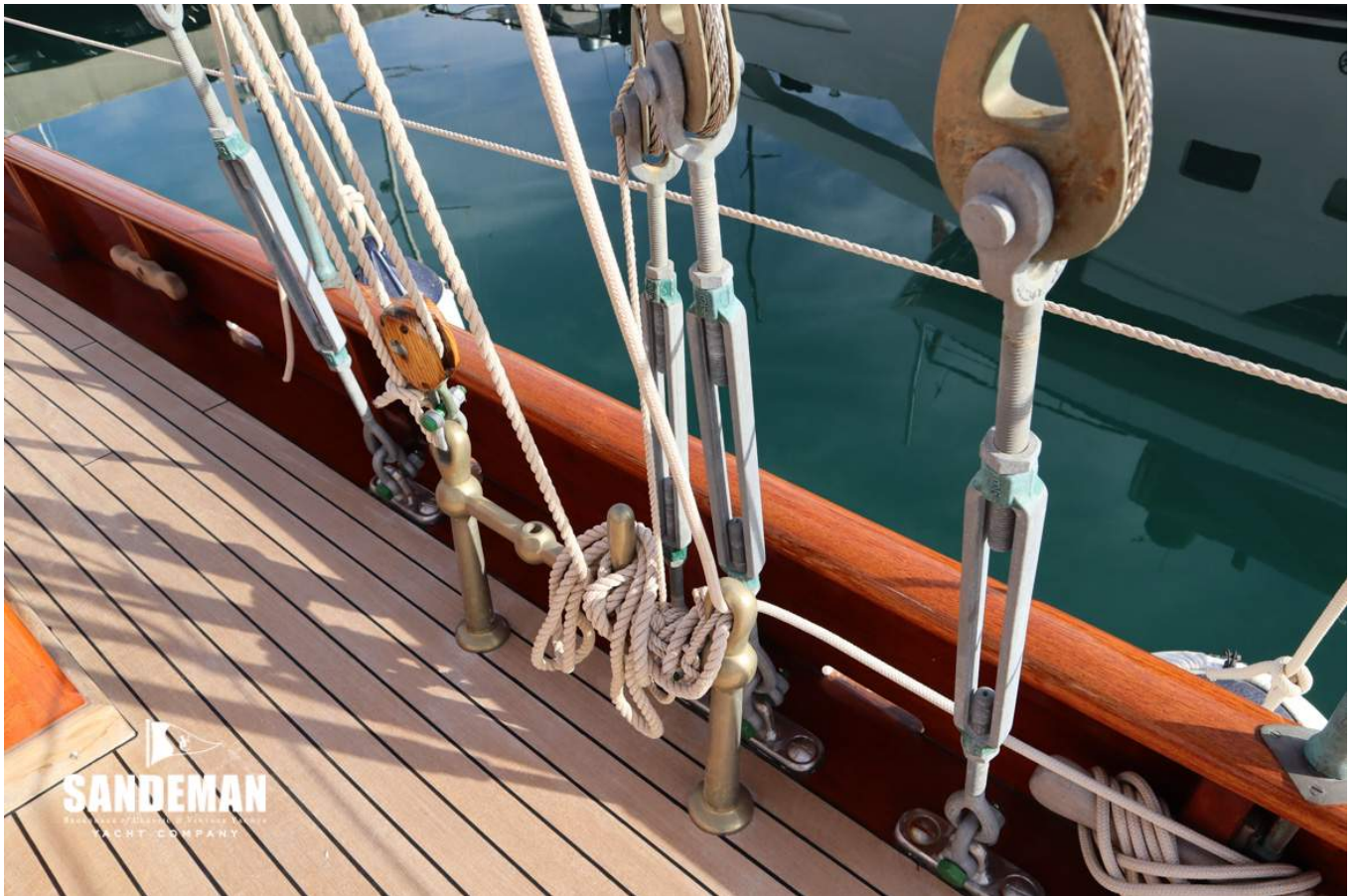
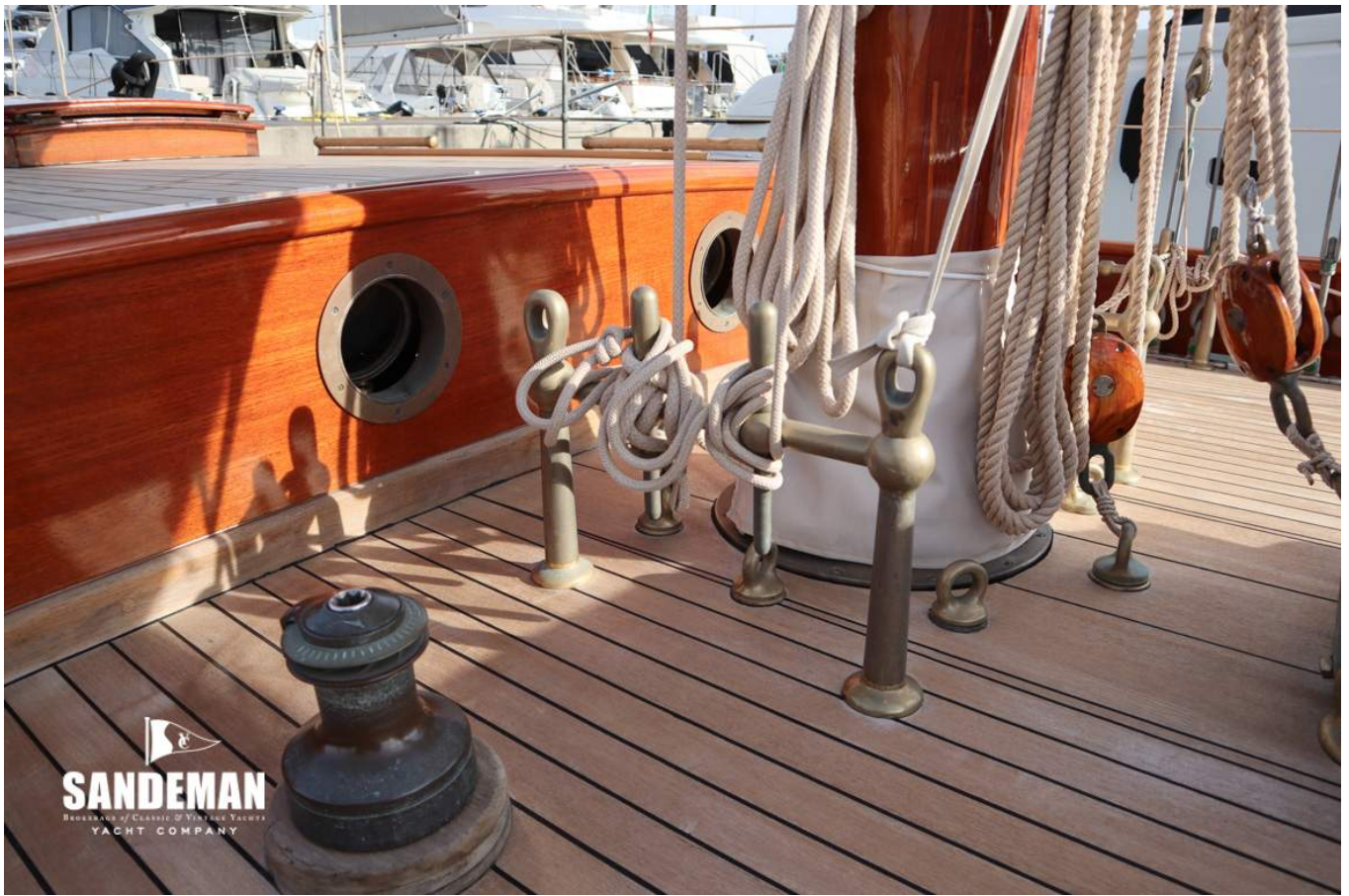


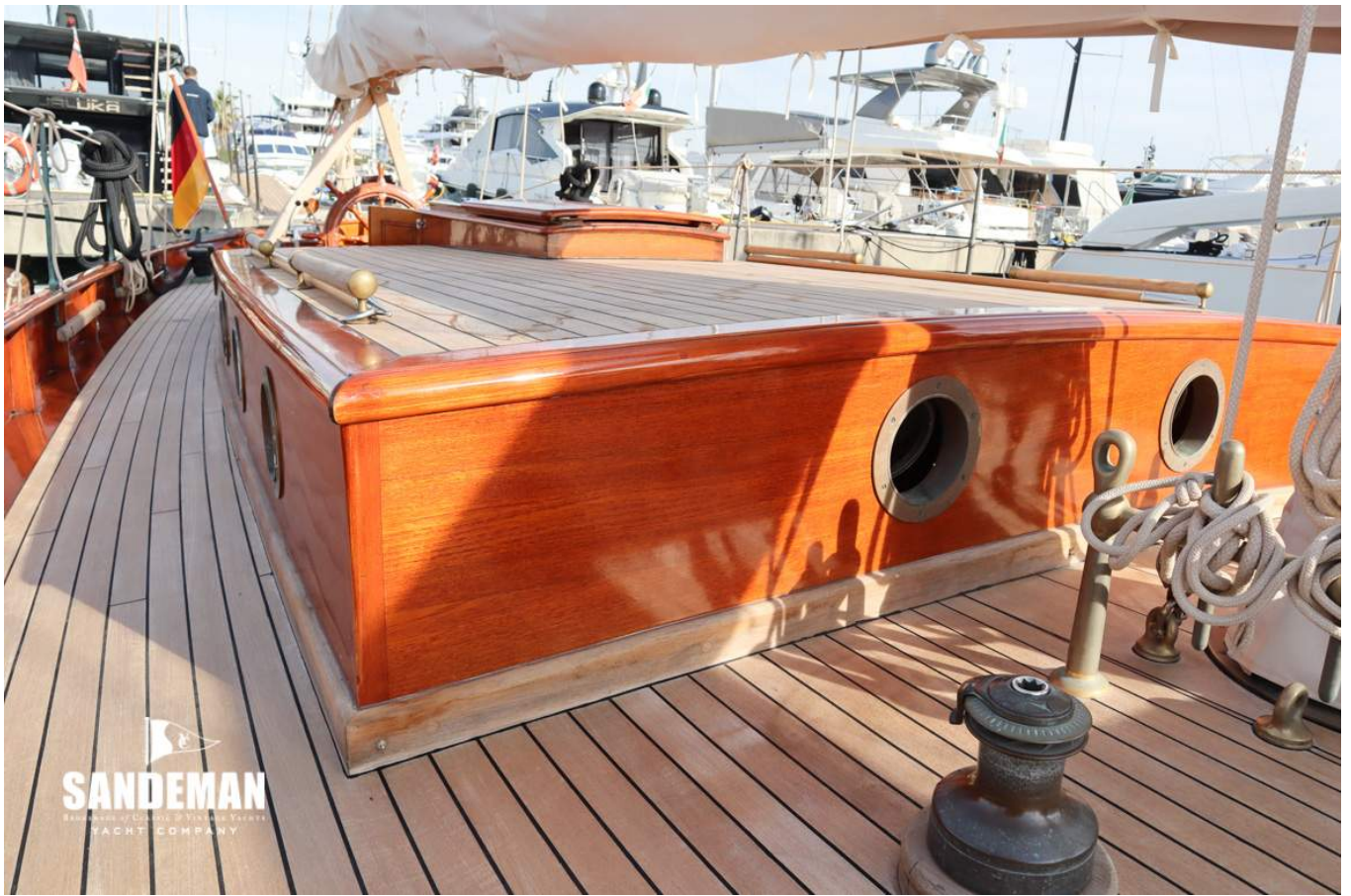






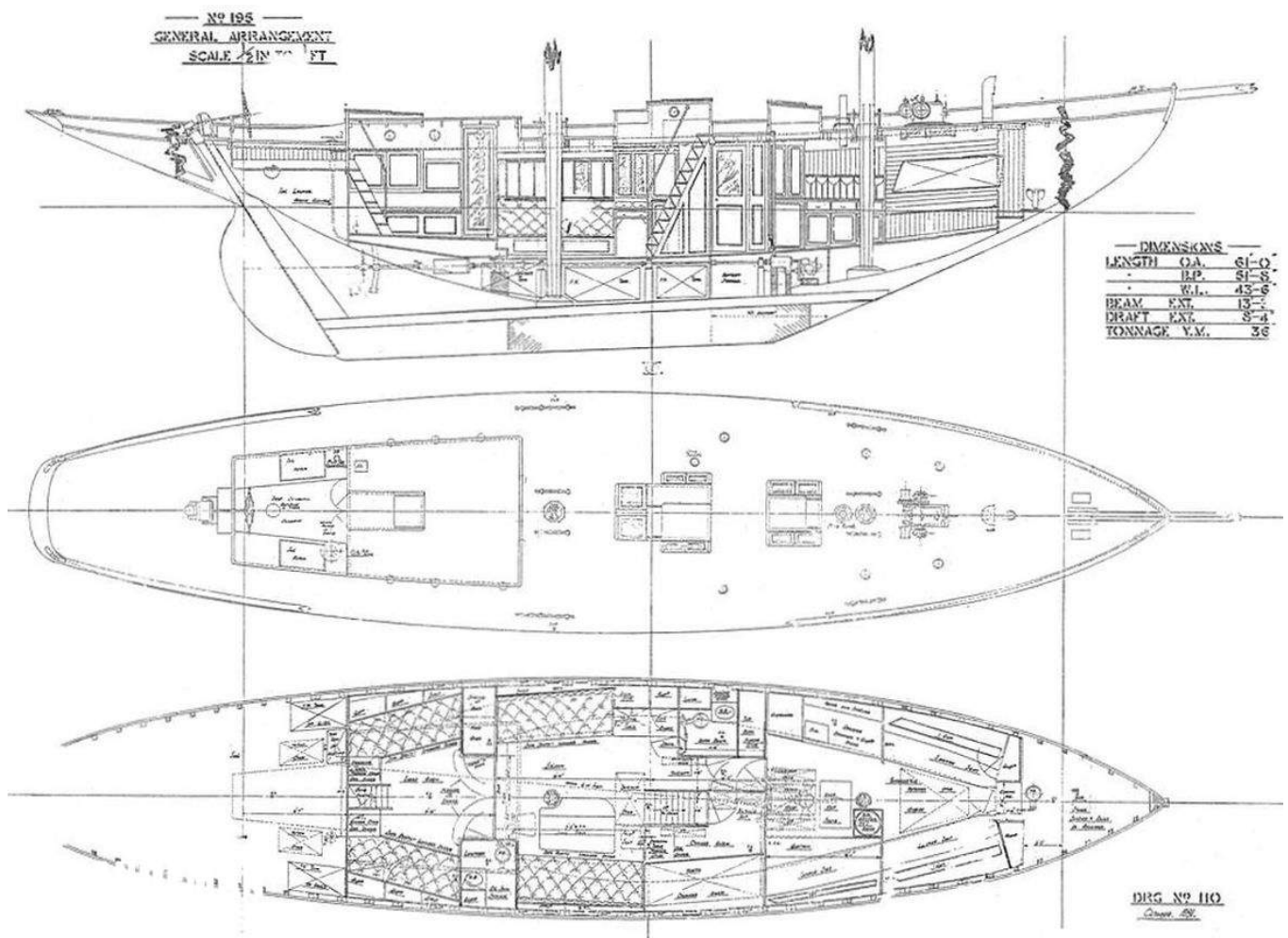


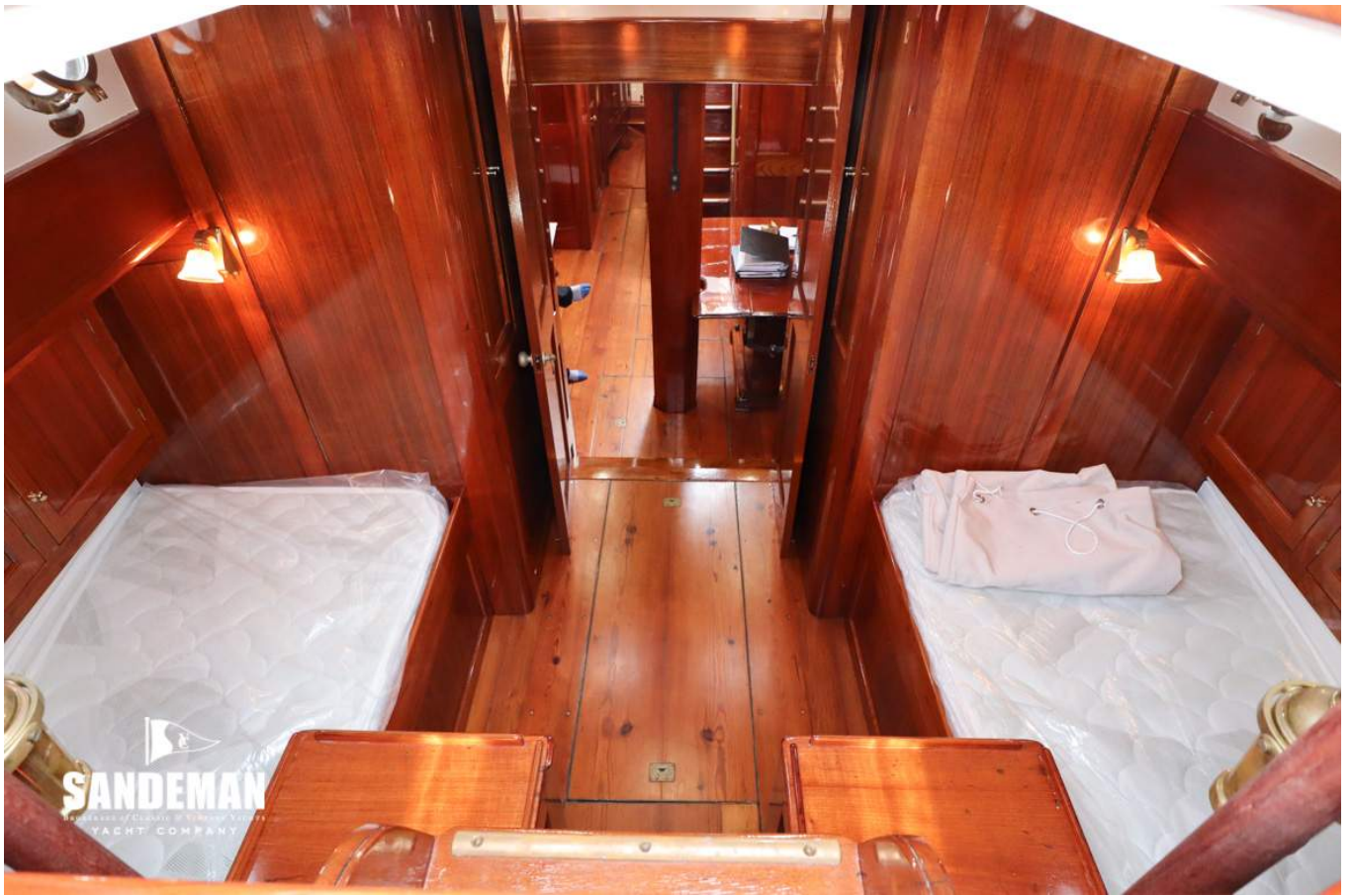













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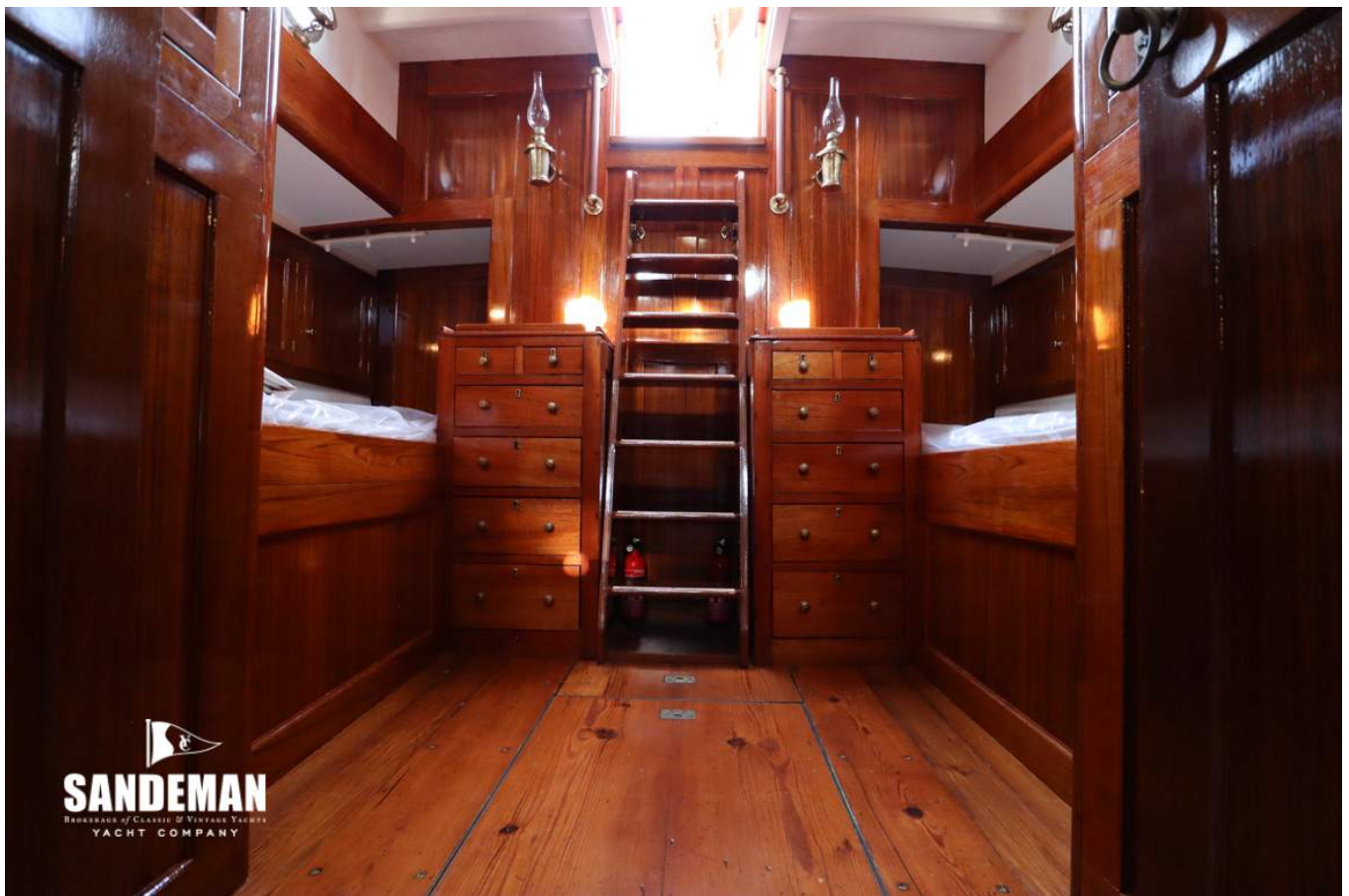
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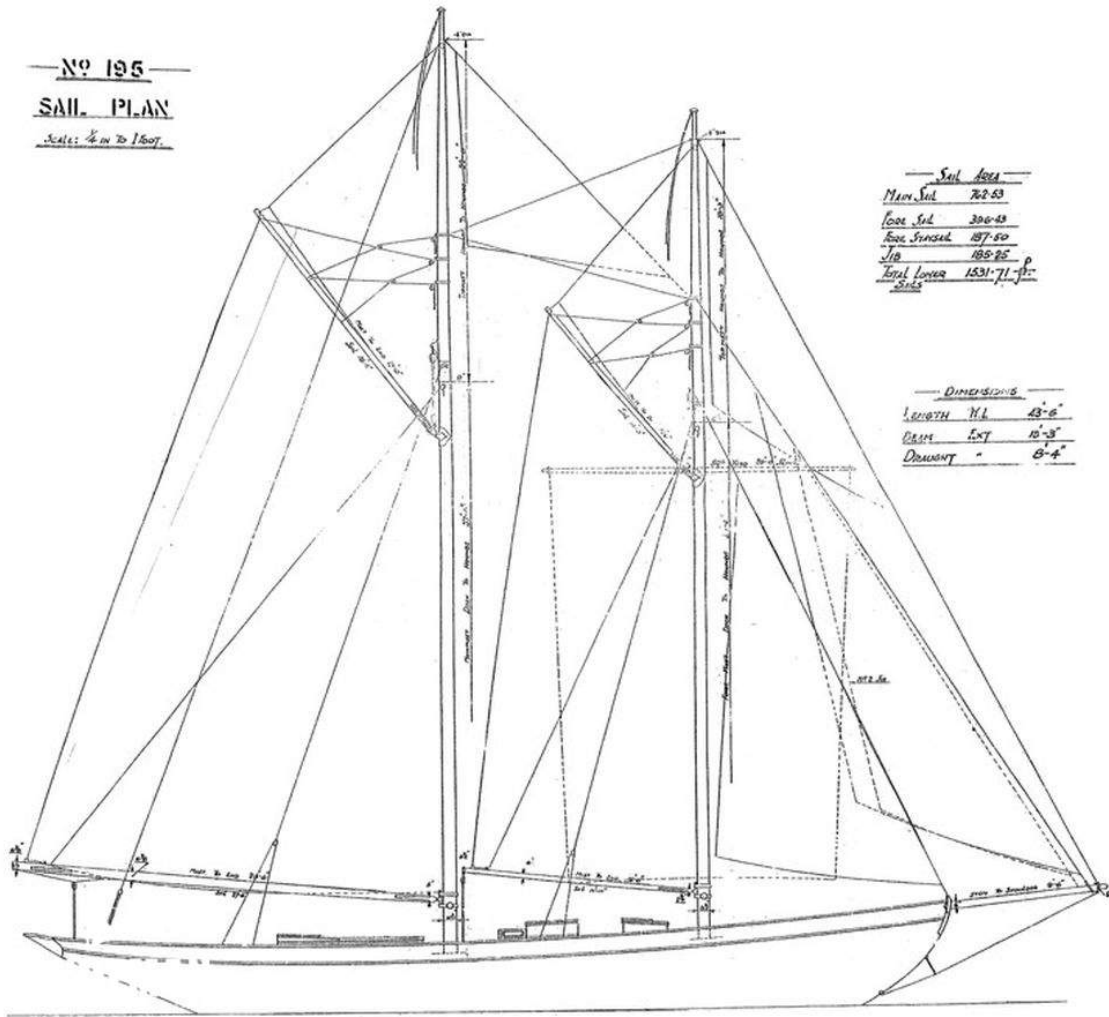


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Nº 195

SAIL PLAN

Scale: 1/4" = 1 foot



Sail Area	
Main Sail	722.53
Fore Sail	300.43
Fore Tinsail	187.50
Jib	185.85
Total Lower	1531.71

Dimensions	
Length H.L.	43'-6"
Beam	10'-3"
Draught	8'-4"

DRG Nº III
Sect. 188

J. M. SOPER, M.I.N.A.

(Late General Manager of J. G. Fay and Co. Ltd.,
Southampton),

**Naval Architect, Surveyor, and Yacht
Broker,**

184, PICCADILLY, LONDON, W.

Mr J. M. SOPER begs to announce that, having severed his connection with Messrs J. G. Fay and Co. Ltd., Southampton, he has opened Offices at the above address for the purpose of carrying on the business of a Naval Architect, Surveyor, and Yacht Broker. He will be pleased to undertake designing and building of both steam and sailing yachts, plan and arrange alterations, repairs, &c., effect Marine Insurances, carry out surveys, and do the general business of a Yacht Broker, for the purchase, sale, and charter of yachts. He ventures to hope that his long experience in all branches of the business and close and careful attention to all orders will merit a share of the patronage and support of yachting gentlemen.



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SANDEMAN
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