

## More on Ships and Kites—George Webster

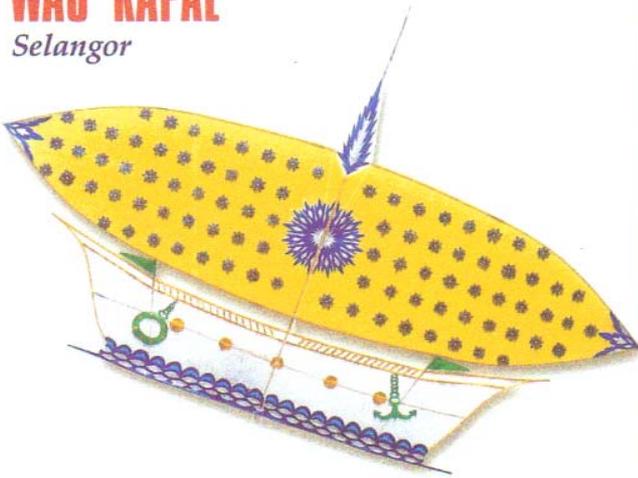
Paul Chapman's article on ship kites reminds me.

Kites. He doesn't mention the Yacht Delta. I don't have one, or a photo, but they were sold by the Kite Store in the 1980's. Basically the two delta wings were the sails with a trailing edge designed to suggest the hull and water.

J-P Kuils Driemaster mentioned by Paul was the front cover of issue 25. The Ghost Clipper is, I think, on the Kite Store ad for issue 25. One of the best ship kites is the Viking long ship flown by Andreas Agren (but I do not think it was his design) of the Swedish Kite and Tango club.

Every Malaysian state now has its own type of Wau. Selangor has the Kapal or ship.

**WAU KAPAL**  
Selangor



Kites for Rescue.

There were several systems designed in the 10<sup>th</sup> century which used kites to help shipwrecks – usually by having the kite flying from the ship in the on-shore wind (on-shore winds were the killers for sailing ships and underpowered steam ships). The kite line could then be used to fix a heavy line to the shore which could be a route to safety. One of the most extensively tested was that of Woodbridge Davis – a New Yorker friend of Eddy. His rescue kite was six pointed and manoeuvred by two lines (See Clive Hart's 'Kites an Historical Survey'). Yet to my knowledge kites were never actually used.

That doesn't surprise me.

Picture the scene as the ship, blown off course by the wind crunches onto the rocks. Amidst a brief and frank discussions as to whose fault it was the 'designated kite launcher' (or DKL) interrupts to ask someone to help force a spar into a tight pocket and is there any chance of a long launch? With the kite flying over the shore the DKL – ignoring the queue for the life boats – is faced with a problem that since

it is a foul night there is no-one on shore to catch the kite and pull in the line. In fact, originally it was not clear how this was to be done but he has the MK II version which has a grappling hook hanging beneath it so all (ALL!) he has to do is to land the kite, pull in and hope the hook holds and the line is strong enough to support him.

It all looked so much easier in the picture on the packet where a crowd of savvy onlookers are on top of a cliff which just matches the kite's flying angle. Time to join the life boat queue remembering the captains last command – 'Sea boot off and every man for himself' – that last bit is authentic.

Perhaps this is why the only kite designer who ever survived a real shipwreck did not get involved in ship to shore rescue systems. He was Lawrence Hargrave and the wreck was off the East coast of Australia in 1872. Several men drowned and some were killed by native Australians as they came ashore.

Several books give the details (e.g. Hudson Shaw and Ruhen). Leaving on one side the reasons why the captain as he left the scene is a ship's boat came under rifle fire from the First Mate, there is much to be admired in the actions of Hargrave. He took provisions up a mast which was still projecting above the sea and smoked a pipe before jumping into white water to get a place on the other ship's boat.

### Some available historic sources

For some time it has been possible to download G Pocock's 'The Aeroplaustic Art' 1827 from the Internet. Readers might like to know that the 1851 edition has been reprinted by Kessinger Publishing's Legacy Reprints.

The title is the same but the author is given as Rose Gilbert – she was Pocock's daughter. There is another copy 'around' but Kessinger's copy includes six illustrations. However, they are from very poor quality plates and the title is not always legible.

Another Kessinger reprint is 'Kites: How to make and how to fly them' by G.J Varney 1897. Here the illustrations are OK and the book has some interesting stuff on flat kites. Clearly he didn't understand Hargrave box kites.

I know of two more from Kessinger: Kitecraft and kite tournaments (1914) by C.M. Miller and A monograph on the mechanics and equilibrium of kites (1897) by C.F. Marvin.

Note that a reprint of the same original of Marvin's book is listed as Author Unknown by reprints from the collection of the University of Michigan Library.