

# Vessel Management Plan

## *Little Dirk*

### 2026



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**Report—Department of Maritime Heritage, Western Australian Museum: No. 364**

## Acknowledgements

The authors thank the Australian National Maritime Museum for providing the grant to deliver this report, through the Maritime Museums of Australia Project Support Scheme (MMAPSS). Particular thanks go to Sue and Dudley Maslen from the Carnarvon Heritage Group (CHG) for their assistance with site access, research support, and willingness to host me during my visit. Thanks to Ross Shardlow from the Maritime Heritage Association of WA for his advice following on from his 2001 Interim Report on the *Little Dirk*. Thanks also to the Shire of Shark Bay in Denham for providing information and photographs of the *Galli Curci* and *Velsheda*.

Cover Image: *Little Dirk* Western Australian Museum (WAM), Carnarvon 2026

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#### **Executive Summary**

The *Little Dirk* Vessel Management Plan (VMP) outlines a program whereby the vessel is conserved in its current configuration as a Shark Bay fishing vessel used during the early to mid-twentieth century. *Little Dirk* is on display out of the water in the Carnarvon Heritage Group's (CHG) historic One Mile Jetty Precinct. It is part of the maritime heritage section, that also includes the former Babbage Island Lighthouse Keepers cottage, and items related to shipping, and the former local whaling industry. The *Little Dirk* VMP will be reviewed every two years, and Section 2 Conservation Requirements yearly.

The Vessel Management Plan for *Little Dirk* determines that CHG will undertake the following actions:

- Maintain the long-term strategy to display, conserve and interpret *Little Dirk* in its current configuration as a Shark Bay fishing vessel used during the early to mid-twentieth century
- As the *Little Dirk* is in an advanced state of deterioration, to take the conservation approach of stabilizing the vessel in its current state as is best possible to avoid further deterioration
- To support complementary experiences in the heritage precinct that reflect histories of fishing in the Shark Bay region, and traditional wooden boat building practice
- Where possible, pursue selective restoration of the *Little Dirk* to highlight its original design characteristics

## SECTION 1: The Vessel and its Significance

### 1.1) Statement of Significance

The *Little Dirk* was built in c1927 by the accomplished West Australian shipwright Robin Gourley. It was built at Gourley's boatshed Riverside Road in East Fremantle, an area once proliferated with boatbuilding activity. Gourley is said to have built five other vessels to a similar design, *Little Dirk* being one of three remaining. Gourley was perhaps best known for his 32ft raters, yachts used for racing on the Swan River, however he also built launches and fishing boats. With his brothers James and Harry, Robin built about fifty vessels. *Little Dirk* was built as a net fishing boat and transported to Shark Bay for use in the pearling industry.

The pearling industry in WA commenced in the late 1850s in Shark Bay, and then expanded north to Cossack, Roebuck Bay, and Broome. It would evolve into a very profitable, and controversial, industry for WA. *Little Dirk* is a unique example of a vessel that used the net dredging method to catch pearls, rather than the diving method necessary for the deeper waters around Broome. *Little Dirk's* design was ideal for the shallow and sheltered environment of Shark Bay, built with a shallow draught and wide beam for the hauling of nets onto the deck. In the late 1960s *Little Dirk* was used to ferry supplies back and forward from Dirk Hartog Island to the mainland, and in the mid 1980s it was passed on to owners in Carnarvon. 2027 will make one hundred years since the build of *Little Dirk*.

### 1.2) Vessel specifications, design and construction

*In some cases, vessel dimensions were taken at multiple points along the vessel due to its deteriorated state to give the best possible sample. Previous detailed measurements taken in 2001 as part of the MHA's Interim Report, and these measurements given at the base of the table. Different figures in 2001 account for the gradual change in Little Dirk's shape due to weather damage and deteriorating cradle support over time.*

Vessel Dimensions and Specifications	
<b>Length Over All (LOA)</b>	29.26ft (8.92m)
<b>Beam (width)</b>	At forward section near mast step: 8.55ft (2.60m) At midships: 10.94ft (3.33m)

	At aft section across propellor shaft tip: 6.82ft (2.07m)
<b>Height</b>	Of Stem: 4.26ft (1.30m) At bow not including keel: 4.36ft (1.32m) At stern not including keel: 4.10ft (1.25m) Height of keel: 175mm At bow including keel: 4.93ft (1.50m) At stern including keel: 4.67ft (1.42m) Height of steel frame support: 175mm Height between vessel and ground at midships: 223mm Height of vessel off ground at bow: 6.24ft (1.90m)
<b>Hull planks (carvel)</b>	20mm deep
<b>Width of ribs/flooring planks</b>	40mm
<b>Width of timber frames</b>	25-30mm
<b>Bilge stringer</b>	85mm
<b>Deck beams (loose)</b>	170mm wide
<b>Mast (separate to vessel)</b>	24.54ft (7.48m) long Base: 129mm wide diameter Centre: 100mm wide diameter Metal fastening tip: 79mm long 50mm wide Wooden tip: 70mm wide
<b>Boom (separate to vessel)</b>	20.37ft long (6.20m) Metal clasp end: 65mm wide Centre: 80mm wide Wooden tip: 65mm wide
<b>Bowsprit</b>	13.32ft (4.06m) long Metal clasp end: 190mm wide Wooden tip end: 60mm wide
<b>Stern boom support (separate to vessel, only one held by CHG)</b>	8.83ftmm (2.69m) long Base: 120 mm wide
<b>Mast step</b>	217mm wide
<b>Keelson</b>	255mm wide
<b>Engine bed</b>	4.98ft (1.51m) long, 620mm wide
<b>Rubbing strake at stern</b>	85mm wide
<b>Timber type</b>	Carvel hull, originally Jarrah planking below the waterline, Oregon planking above the

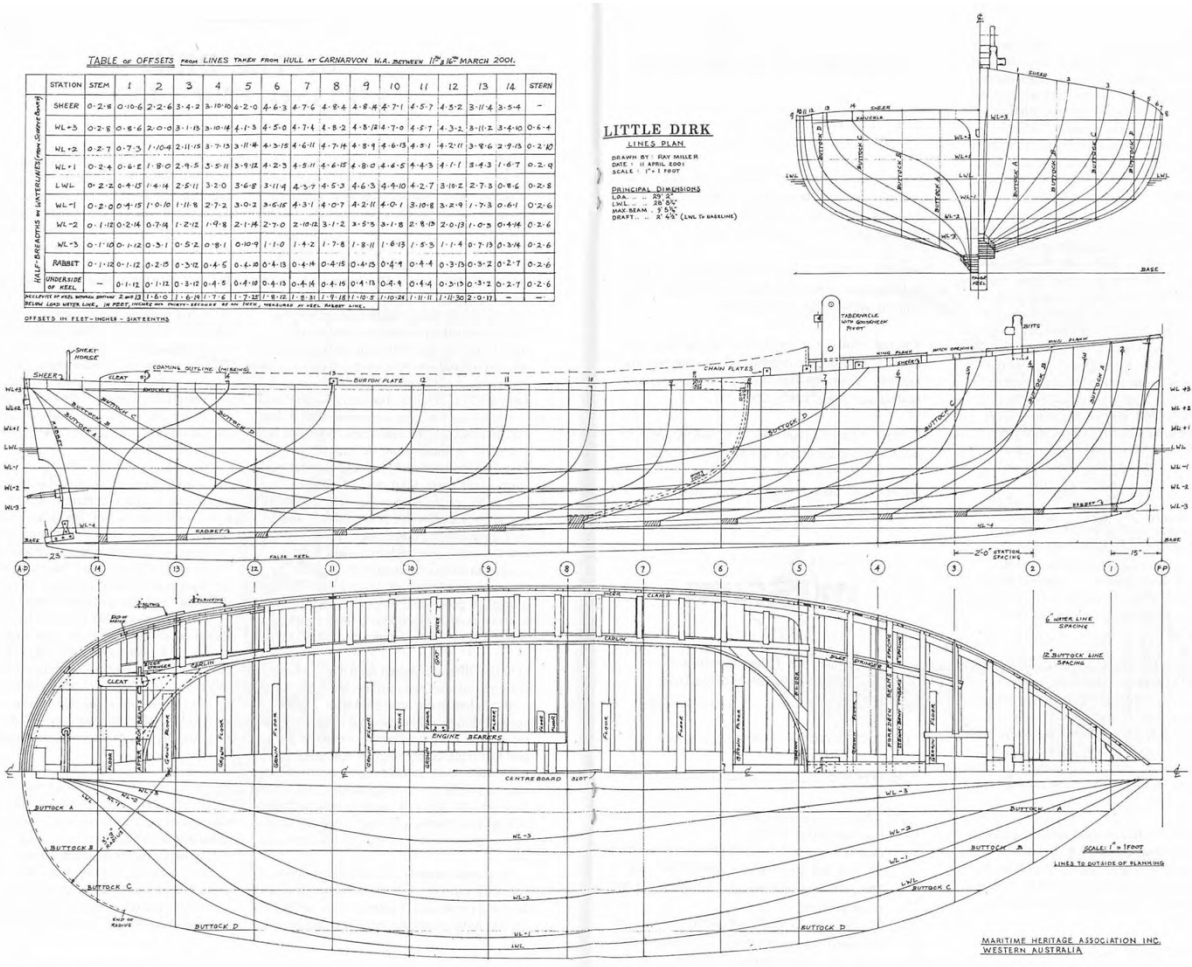
	waterline. Patchwork planking and maintenance done with unknown timber types
<b>Keel/Centreboard</b>	Originally centreboard with case, replaced by a 180mm false keel at an unknown date also
<b>Rigging</b>	Single mast, cutter rig, standing bowsprit
<b>Propulsion</b>	Originally sail, engine later introduced
<b>Material</b>	Jarah planking below the waterline, Oregon planking on topsides
<b>Other components</b>	<p>Drainage hole towards stern port, and drainage holes on starboard side. These fittings were used for engine cooling water intake (lower fitting) and overboard discharge of the engine cooling system (higher fitting).</p> <p>Forward hull starboard and hull side ropes protruding. Rope stretched taught across forward bulkhead section.</p>
<b>Date of launch</b>	c1927
<b>Place of building</b>	East Fremantle WA
<b>Builder</b>	Robin Gourley
<b><i>MHA's 2001 Dimensions</i></b>	<p><i>LOA 29'2" 8.890m LWL 28'8" 8.744m Beam 9'54" 2.877m Depth 3'8" 1.118m Depth overall 5'2 1/2" 1.587m Draft (LWL - Baseline) 2'4 1/2" .724m</i></p> <p>*Noticeable change in the beam, from 2.877, in 2001 to 3.355 in 2026 – suggesting sagging of hull timbers over time</p>

### ***Design Detail and Plan***

Gourley designed *Little Dirk* as a gaff rigged cutter. Its most distinguishing trait is its cartwheel like stern, a standard on Gourley's fishing vessels. The stern of the *Little Dirk* was designed to be nearly semi-circular in planform at the deck, while the hull planking finishes almost as a double ended shape and the rudder then hangs off the end of the

hull.<sup>1</sup> Gourley made approximately six other vessels to this design, the *Mafalda* and the *Britannia* the only others known still extant.

Gourley is said to have adapted this design from a style seen in Scottish fishing craft of the period. Former head shipwright at the WA Museum Bill Leonard was consulted during a 2001 assessment of the *Little Dirk* by the Maritime Heritage Association (MHA), and he confirmed the Scottish design influence. Leonard stated that the cartwheel stern of *Little Dirk* is representative of a Loch Fyne skiff, otherwise known as a ‘nabby’. This was a popular style of fishing boat found on the west coast of Scotland and related to a larger class of fishing vessel called a ‘Zulu’<sup>2</sup>.



*Little Dirk* Lines Plan drawn by Ray Miller, Maritime Heritage Association of WA on 11 April 2001

<sup>1</sup> ‘Little Dirk’, *Australian Register of Historic Vessels*, Accessed: <<https://arhv.sea.museum/objects/121308/little-dirk?ctx=9aea203722b7108e19bdd3d46fbfc9a7b4e514be&idx=0>>.  
<sup>2</sup> ‘Interim report on the survey and assessment of the 30’ cutter *Little Dirk*’, prepared for the *Maritime Heritage Association*, by Ross Shardlow July 2001. Provided to WAM by Ross Shardlow in February 2026 in advance of the March 2026 visit to Carnarvon.



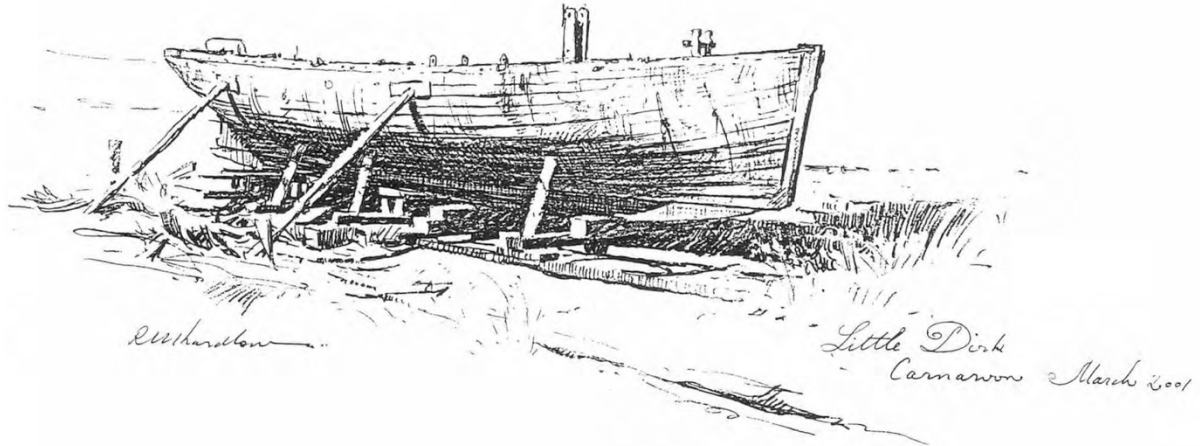
*Cartwheel stern section of Little Dirk, photo courtesy WAM*



*Starboard side profile of Little Dirk, photo courtesy WAM*



*Forward portside profile of Little Dirk, photo courtesy WAM*



*Pen and ink sketch of the Little Dirk on the hardstand at Carnarvon by Ross Shardlow, Maritime Heritage Association of WA in March 2001*

### **Components of vessel not in boat**

During the March 2026 visit to Carnarvon a few items from the *Little Dirk* were acquired from private owners and located at different locations in the CHG precinct. The mast, boom, bowsprit and boom stern support were all acquired off a previous owner of the *Little Dirk*. Reference to the rigging of another Shark Bay lugger of near identical design to *Little Dirk*, the *Galli Curci*, helped identify the rigging components. The rigging is in good condition and could become part of a nice display alongside the *Little Dirk*.





*Little Dirk rigging components acquired by CHG March 2026, photo courtesy WAM*

Five planks from the *Little Dirk* were in the shed next to the Railway Museum section of the CHG precinct. They are curved timbers and could be timbers used in the deck structure of the *Little Dirk*.



*Loose curved timbers from Little Dirk, photo courtesy WAM*

### 1.3) Provenance, history of ownership and use

*Little Dirk* was designed and built by Robin Gourley at his boatshed in East Fremantle. The exact date of launch for the *Little Dirk* is not known, however current documentation puts a date of 1927.<sup>3</sup> Gourley's yard was located on Riverside Road in what was known as Richmond, now East Fremantle, near where the old HMAS *Leeuwin* shed was situated. Robin Gourley migrated to Australia from Tipperary Ireland with his brothers Harry, James and Ernie in 1887.<sup>4</sup> James and Harry were also involved in boatbuilding, and collectively the three brothers focused on building yachts, launches, and fishing boats. They built about fifty vessels in total, and Robin also worked for shipbuilders Murray & Mowson.

<sup>3</sup> 'Interim report on the survey and assessment of the 30' cutter *Little Dirk*', Shardlow.

<sup>4</sup> In Search of Fish and Fortune Along Australia's West Coast, Bill Leonard, (Western Australian Museum, Welshpool: 2017), p. 154.

Perhaps the best known Gourley yacht was *Whitewings*, a 32ft rater, and its sister vessel *Cinderella*, both unbeatable in racing in their day.<sup>5</sup> Further vessels known to have been built by the Gourleys include the yachts *Pioneer*, raced for forty-nine years by Harry Gourley, *Lynx*, *Penelope*, *Mayflower* (1906), the launch *Iverna II*, and fishing boats *Lupia*, and *Felimina*. There is a park in East Fremantle on the corner of Riverside and Preston Point Road named Gourley Park, which indicates that the Gourley brothers were a big presence in the local boatbuilding industry.

It is not known exactly when *Little Dirk* was transported to Shark Bay for fishing and pearling use, or who its first owners were. During the early to mid-twentieth century pearling was one of the most significant industries in WA and was largely centred around Broome as a base for the pearl fields offshore. Shark Bay, further south of Broome, and its shallow waterways also presented as a rich source of pearl shell. The pearling industry was one of the first major industries in this Gascoyne region, with the pearl shell being used for buttons and jewellery as well as for oyster meat.<sup>6</sup>

*Little Dirk* is typical of a craft used in Shark Bay, with its shallow draft, single mast, and smaller size differing traits to the luggers working out of Broome.<sup>7</sup> Whilst not purpose built as a pearl sheller, it is highly likely a prospective businessperson would have seen *Little Dirk* in Perth and seen an opportunity for its use in Shark Bay not long after its build. *Little Dirk* would have dredged the shallow sea floor for pearl shell, the material then sorted on deck with each load.

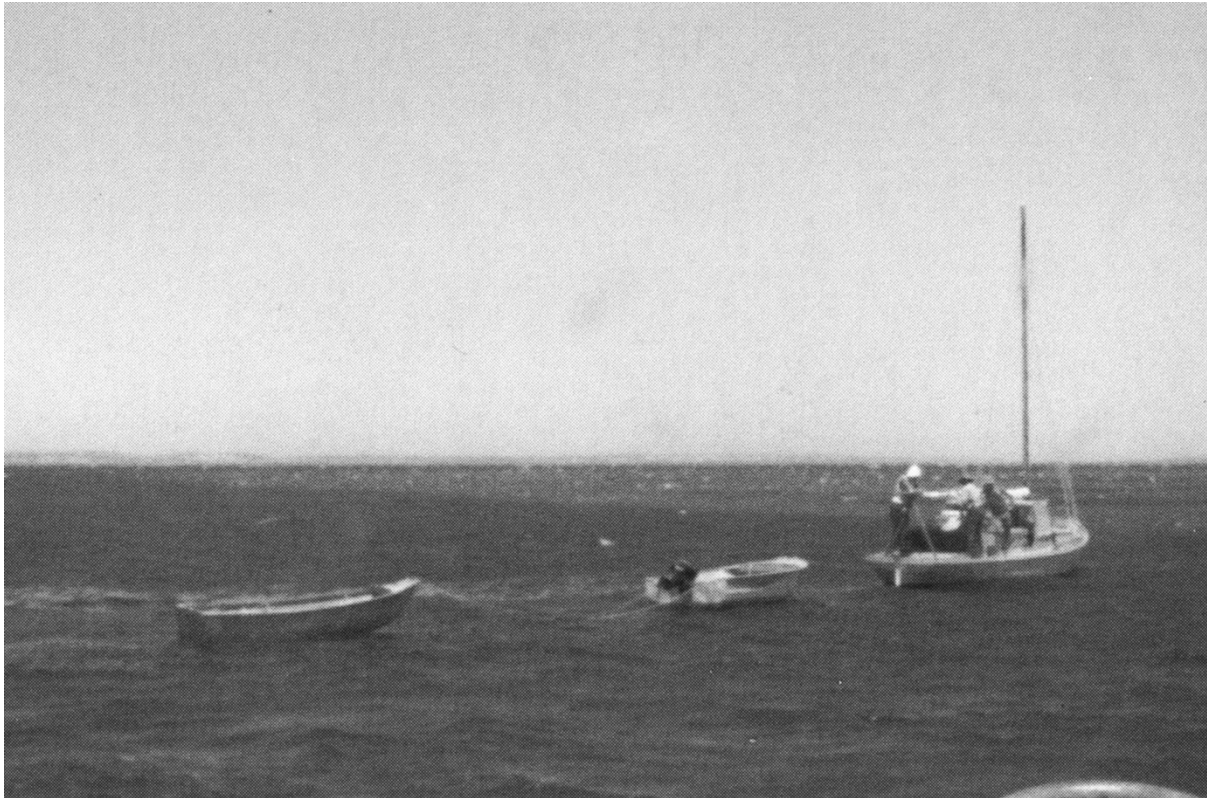
The advantage of *Little Dirk's* cartwheel stern in this context was that it allowed for a clearer area for deploying nets, in comparison to a square stern shape. Unwanted material and small shell dredged up could be easily kicked over the side after the good shells had been selected. *Little Dirk* could be effectively managed by a crew of two – which was another advantage over the Broome luggers, which required a larger crew size.

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<sup>5</sup> In Search of Fish and Fortune Along Australia's West Coast, Leonard, p. 154.

<sup>6</sup> Little Dirk (old ARHV Page no longer online), *Australian Register of Historic Vessels*, Access provided by ANMM February 2026.

<sup>7</sup> 'Little Dirk', *Australian Register of Historic Vessels*, <<https://arhv.sea.museum/objects/121308/little-dirk?ctx=9aea203722b7108e19bdd3d46fbfc9a7b4e514be&idx=0>>.



*Little Dirk towing two tenders. Date and location unknown*

Previous names of *Tarnie* and *Kathlyn* have been noted for the *Little Dirk*, and during its early life it is said to have won a place in the Fremantle to Bunbury Yacht Race. Further research is being undertaken on this.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 1968 Peter and Edith Gosper purchased the *Little Dirk* for \$3,000 in Geraldton. They are the first known owners of the vessel, and it was them that named the vessel *Little Dirk* following on from another larger vessel of theirs named *Dirk*. The Gaspers were then owners of a pastoral lease on Dirk Hartog Island and used the *Little Dirk* to ferry supplies back and forward to the mainland. In 1970 *Little Dirk* was sold to another private owner in Useless Loop on the northern tip of the Carrarang Peninsula in Shark Bay. It was passed on to one more owner in Denham, who operated the *Little Dirk* as a commercial fishing vessel. Following this Phil Wood purchased the vessel and took it out of survey, using *Little Dirk* recreationally for four or five years.

Phil Wood passed on the *Little Dirk* to owners in Carnarvon in the mid to late 1980s, the exact date not known. When it first arrived, the *Little Dirk* was used as a tender for a harbour dredge at Pelican Point on the southern tip of Babbage Island. Work was being undertaken at the time for a new yacht marina. *Little Dirk* was used in this capacity for about a year, before being stripped of its engine and abandoned in a tidal creek at Pelican Point.

*Little Dirk* was eventually salvaged and refloated with tractor tyres, lifted from the creek and placed on the hard standing next to the Carnarvon Beach Holiday Resort at Pelican

Point. The then managers of the resort, Ray and Diane Fidock, became custodians of the vessel. Following their ownership, the *Little Dirk* was donated to the Carnarvon Heritage Group. An exact date for this is still being established. The current custodians of the *Little Dirk* have been involved with CHG since 2023 and were present at the time of the writing of this VMP.

#### 1.4) Comparative Vessels

##### ***Mafalda***





*Mafalda at the Maylands Amateur Boatbuilding Yard, photo courtesy WAM*



*Mafalda in pen at Fremantle Fishing Boat Harbour, date unknown. Hull shape and rudder orientation interesting to note. Photo courtesy WAM*

One of two sister vessels still extant and built during the same period as *Little Dirk* by Robin Gourley. The *Mafalda* was built in c1926 for the Merendino Family, who had commissioned Gourley to build a vessel for primarily cray fishing purposes. Salvatore Merendino subsequently used *Mafalda* for an impressive forty three of the sixty years that he fished off the WA coast. *Mafalda* stayed largely within the *Merendino* family from 1926 to 1993, aside a period from 1969 to 1985 when it was owned outside of the family and sailed to the Abrolhos from Fremantle.<sup>8</sup>

As of 2026 the *Mafalda* is currently under restoration at the Amateur Boatbuilding Yard in Maylands Perth. The current custodians of the vessel have held ownership since 1993 and have done an excellent job in maintaining what is original on the *Mafalda*. Most of the hull planking is original, and all restorations completed in other sections of the vessel since the early 1990s have sought to replicate the original design and layout of the *Mafalda*. Of the three existing sister vessels, the *Mafalda* is perhaps in the best condition and the best comparative model for the CHG to draw off.

### ***Britannia***

The *Britannia* is the second of two sister vessels to *Little Dirk* still extant. *Britannia* was more of a pleasure fishing boat compared to *Mafalda* which was used in a working capacity. *Britannia* further went through more modifications from its original design than *Mafalda*. Research is still being undertaken on the whereabouts and current owner of the *Britannia*.

### ***Garbo***



*Garbo*, photographer Tommy Rann, courtesy WAM

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<sup>8</sup> In Search of Fish and Fortune Along Australia's West Coast, Leonard, p. 154.

*Garbo* is a fishing vessel that was built in 1928 in Perth by Tommy Rann Senior. The vessel was named after Swedish American actress Greta Garbo. *Garbo* is very similar in design to the *Little Dirk* and was also used in Shark Bay for pearl dredging. *Garbo* was later used briefly as a fisheries patrol vessel and later acquired by the WA museum in 1996. Even though it was in poor condition at the time, Bill Leonard, former head shipwright with WAM, sought to acquire the *Garbo* to illustrate vessel construction and conservation techniques, and to demonstrate what occurs to timber vessels once they deteriorate. Further, Leonard saw significance in the *Garbo* as a physical representation of the history and many stories associated with the Shark Bay fishing industry. Considering the condition of the *Little Dirk*, a very similar approach can be taken.

### ***Galli Curci***



*The Galli Curci in water in Denham, photo courtesy Shark Bay World Heritage Discovery & Visitor Centre*

The *Galli Curci* is a sister vessel to the *Garbo*. It was named after opera star Amalita Galla Curci and was built in 1929 for a pastoral family as a dredging, fishing, and small cargo vessel. The *Galli Curci* passed through a succession of private owners, and then being donated to the WA Museum. In 1998, the vessel was deaccessioned and transferred to Shark Bay Shire for display in water in front of the visitor centre in Denham.

Since its transfer to Denham nothing extensive has been done on the *Galli Curci* aside routine cleaning. A solar panel exists to power an electric pump for the bilge, and bird poo is cleaned off the vessel twice a year. It comes out of water every two or three years for a repaint, the last time this occurred was in 2021. The *Galli Curci* is perhaps one of the best vessels still extant that accurately represents the late 1920s Shark Bay fishing vessel design. Its rigging is not original however, and was introduced during an earlier restoration.

### ***Velsheda***



*Velsheda* on display in Denham, photo courtesy Shark Bay World Heritage Discovery & Visitor Centre

The *Velsheda* is another sister vessel to the *Garbo* and the *Galli Curci*. It was used in Shark Bay and restored in 2002 in Albany. In 2011 it was placed on display out of the water near the Shark Bay World Heritage Discovery & Visitor Centre. It is not in as good condition as the *Galli Curci* and requires restoration work but is nonetheless a good example of the 1930s Shark Bay fishing vessel style.

### **1.5) Chronology of changes, if made, to the vessel**

During its time as a tender to a dredge in Carnarvon in the 1970s *Little Dirk* was fitted with a cabin and an oversized engine. This affected the trim of the vessel aft, and it was later removed. A straight keel was also introduced on the vessel for further support. The *Little Dirk* would have originally had an outboard rudder, and it was then installed with a keel hung rudder – presumably at the same time as the keel.

## **SECTION 2: Conservation Requirements and Annual Operations**

### **2.1) Conservation approach**

Little is known on the conservation approach taken on the *Little Dirk* by the CHG. An earlier roof structure did exist over the vessel, so some preventative conservation methods have been employed previously. A survey and assessment report by the Maritime Heritage Association of the *Little Dirk* in 2001 recommended for the stabilization of the vessel with minimal disturbance to hull timbers. In 2013, *Little Dirk* is noted to have been stabilized and undergoing restoration, however the outcomes of this restoration are not known.


Following a condition assessment of the *Little Dirk* in March of 2026 and discussion with the current caretakers, a decision was made to continue the stabilization preservation approach for the vessel. This effectively means to preserve the vessel in situ as much as possible, with an adoption of methods to maintain the original hull shape and other distinguishing original characteristics of the vessel.

A complete restoration of the vessel would be too challenging and costly and may lead to further deterioration through removal and work on components of the vessel which are already quite fragile. Furthermore, the Gascoyne region has a lack of individuals with wooden boatbuilding expertise, and in turn may be challenging to get a team together to work on the vessel. This is not to say that through grants and other means people with the appropriate level of expertise could travel to Carnarvon and advise/work on the stabilization of the vessel.

The deteriorated and largely deconstructed nature of the vessel lends well to the interpretive goal of examining the boats construction through parts, and more broadly, traditional wooden boat building construction methods used on fishing vessels of the period.

### **2.1.1) Findings of the condition assessment undertaken on Little Dirk W/C 9<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

*Little Dirk* is displayed outside uncovered in the lighthouse area of the CHG precinct. It is viewed in open sunlight and all other weather conditions. As it has been in the open weather for so long, all the timbers are dried out, cracked, and fragile. *Little Dirk* is supported by ageing wooden cradle, with four individual supports on each side of the vessel. These supports in turn sit on a large rectangular steel frame which covers the length of the vessel. The *Little Dirk's* keel, which is not original, sits on this steel frame with pieces of wood in some sections separating the keel from the frame.

Section	Observations	Photos
Stem	- In good condition. Research needed upper section of the stem, where another rectangular timber with an indentation juts out. This potentially supported part of the rigging, or was where a bow roller sheave was placed.	

Outer Hull Portside

- Forward two hull supports misaligned on steel frame, and could slip further out resulting in a lack of support given to hull
- Corrosion on brackets and fastenings of all hull supports. Risk of corrosion bleeding into timber.
- No overt signs of hull timbers sagging around supports, but it would be a future risk.
- Insect nest on aft hull support.
- Stern hull support a different design, if/when a new cradle is fixed all supports should match so things are more seamless.
- Dirt from ground evident to have splashed up from weather onto white planking.
- Paint on hull planking unoriginal and not marine grade.
- Hull planking coming apart at the seams.



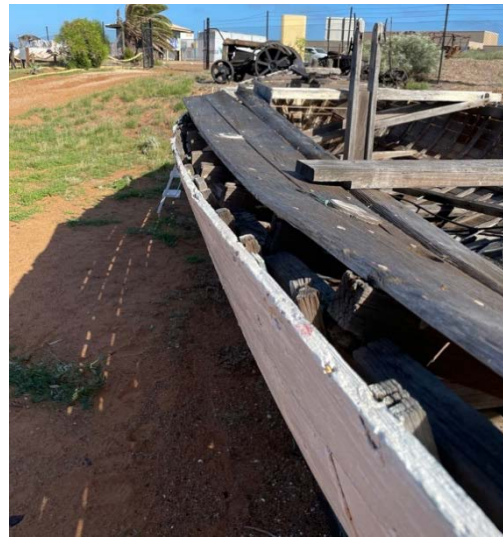
Outer Hull  
Starboard


- Similar observations to port with misalignment of hull supports and corrosion.
- Plant growth up near vessel.
- Animal, goanna, nest near vessel.
- Pressure from hull support midships causing hull plank to cave in, and crack rib/flooring on inside of hull.



Gunwale  
Portside

- Copper nails of various sizes protruding, some loose laying amongst the timbers. Most in an advanced stage of corrosion. The use of copper nails in *Little Dirk* is also evident via the nail and rove method used to fasten the hull planks to the timbers. This is an interesting method in this case, in that many fishing boats would avoid this approach as the method would result in fishing nets catching on protruding roved nails when placed aboard.
- Any form of coaming or rubbing strake removed, upper most hull plank at top near edge, with tips of ribs/flooring exposed.
- Some evidence of coaming aft.
- Evidence of three deck planks midships that are twisted and sagging. One steel fitting still attached, potentially where runners were attached for the rigging.



<p>Gunwale Starboard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Similar observations to port with copper nails and coaming.</li><li>- Two pieces of timber, unclear of original usage on boat, protruding over edge.</li></ul>	

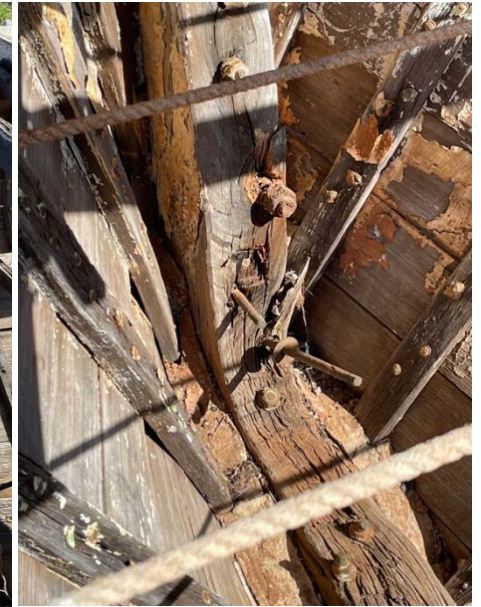
Stern



- Aft port coaming stretches along cartwheel stern.
- Hull planking coming away and exposing inside of vessel on both port and starboard sides of stern, more severe on starboard.
- Hull planking more exposed at the seams port aft.
- Stern post structurally sound .
- Propellor shaft tip protruding .
- Steel rubbing strip attached to stern.



Forward section inside hull

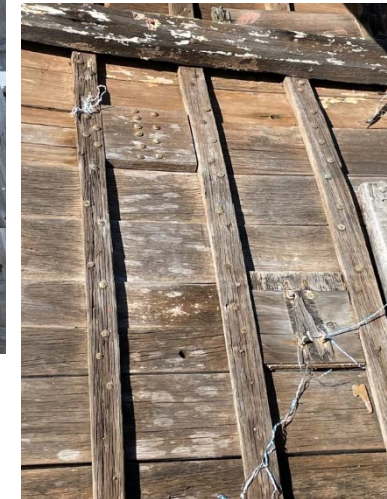
- Four of the forward deck beams and one deck plank up near bow, intact and fixed across beam of vessel.
- One deck beam fallen and broken aft of fourth beam.
- Grown chock at bow of vessel damaged at base with metal fastenings protruding.
- Three sister planks placed on the forward inside of the hull to support damaged timbers. Patchwork maintenance apparent to inner hull of vessel.
- Hull planking fastened to timbers using copper nails and roves.

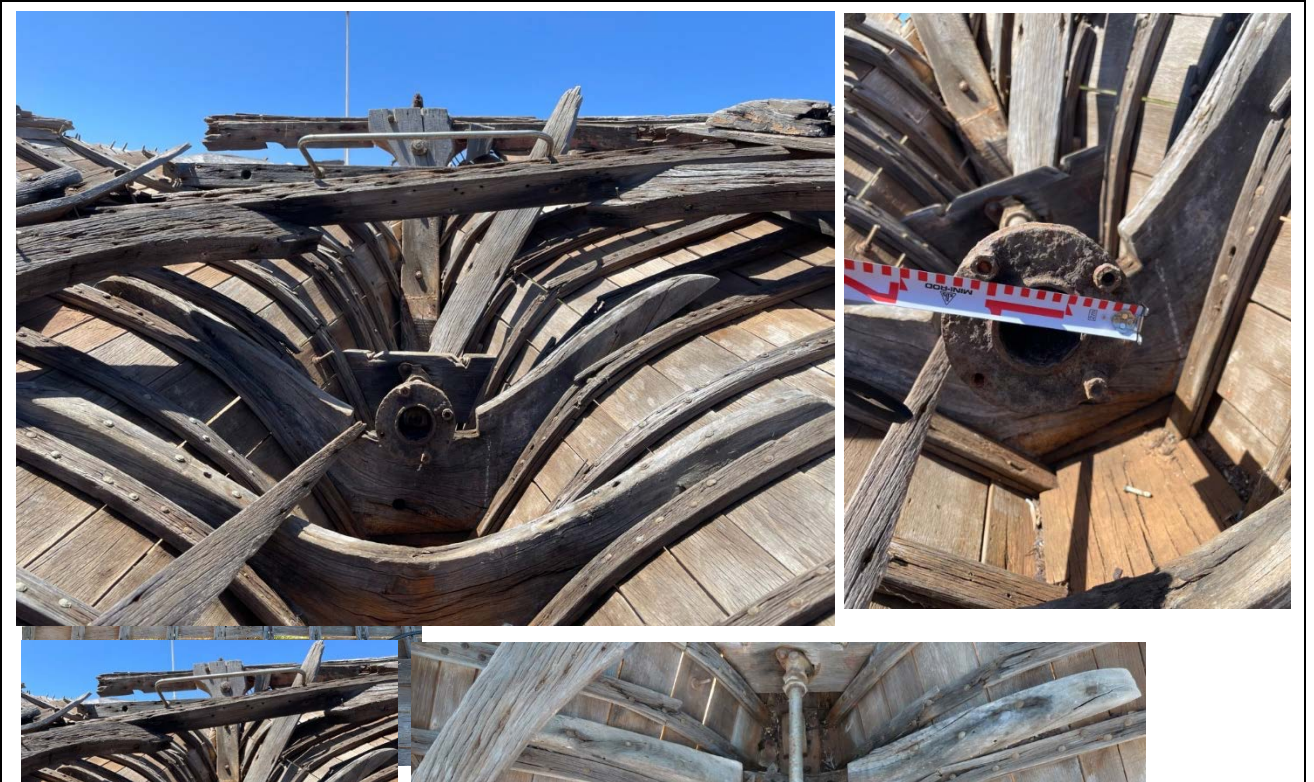


<p>Midships section inside hull</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ribs/floors largely in good condition, with some cracked where hull curves upwards – near outer hull supports.</li> <li>- Engine bed in fair condition.</li> <li>- Hanging knees at midships solid and in fair condition.</li> <li>- Large piece of timber forward centre protruding upwards, would have been where the mast was stepped. Plastic cleats attached to top of timber – introduced material. Bronze fitting starboard side adjacent to mast step, likely for rigging.</li> <li>- Loose bits of rusted metal and other metal fittings.</li> <li>- Bilge stringers apparent and mostly intact.</li> <li>- Keelson worn but intact.</li> <li>- Black tubing and other pieces of miscellaneous timber sitting loose in centre of vessel. Some timber curved,</li> </ul>	   

could be smaller hanging knee sections.

- Bung hole in fourth plank up from keel, for drainage of bilge



<p>Aft section inside hull</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Numerous loose timbers and beams including metal railing.</li><li>- Inner propellor shaft separated from what would have been the engine, introduced to the vessel at a later date.</li><li>- Metal drainage component up near port stern. This was likely for overboard discharge of the engine cooling system.</li></ul>	





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Overall, the *Little Dirk* is in poor to fair condition. There is a need for weather protection, and to stabilise deteriorating vessel components, particularly those that are original. A priority should be to address and stabilize the stern section where the hull planking is severely coming apart. Where possible, removal and re-arranging of loose timbers at stern section should be done to show elegant shape of the hull.

There is the potential for the introduction of new timbers at the stern to replicate the distinctive cartwheel stern shape. If this can be managed to support the broken-down sections and recreate elements of the original design, that would be ideal. This would be a more substantial reconstruction project and should be done ideally by a shipwright, or by someone who has expertise working with aged timbers. The internal hull timbers should be coated in protective epoxy resin to offer further protection and support for the future.

The building of a new cradle for the vessel would be a priority, as the current cradle is ageing and not offering much support. In some cases, the cradle is causing cracking to frames inside the hull. Care should be taken when removing the current cradle in case any sections of the vessel dismantle in the process or deteriorate any further.

## **2.2 ) Restoration undertaken, including a documentation of works since acquired**

As noted above, in 2013, *Little Dirk* is noted to have been stabilized and undergoing restoration. The outcomes of this are not apparent, and considering the current deteriorated state of the vessel any potential restoration progress may have been reversed.

## **2.3) Adaptation measures**

No major known adaptation methods have been taken on the *Little Dirk*. Differing vessel parts have been replaced on the *Little Dirk* over time, however as of 2026 the vessel has been stripped down effectively to the hull with minimal decking and a mixture of original timbers and introduced planking for stabilization.

## **2.4) Maintenance/repair work undertaken**

The current custodians of the *Little Dirk* have been involved with the CHG since mid 2023. From what can be established from them, the outside of the vessel was painted white in 2022. The other work on the vessel in their time has entailed the application of Lantec, a lanolin-based oil coating, on the timbers inside the hull.

## **2.5) Schedule of works, and estimated costs**

The following table details planned works on the *Little Dirk*, and suggested planned works that could be fitted in over the 2026-2027 calendar year:

Works	Detail
Shelter installed over <i>Little Dirk</i>	Planned and paid for. New 12 x 12 metre shelter planned for installation of the <i>Little Dirk</i> and the <i>Albatross</i> . Both vessels to be facing north.
Removal of loose vessel parts inside hull	Removal and sorting of timbers inside the hull. This is especially important as it will reduce the weight upon the structural components of the vessel and assist in maintaining the hull shape. This should include identifying and categorising of any original components. If these components can be retrieved, they could be potentially worked on and restored. No cost for retrieval, cost associated with restoring vessel parts.
Construction of a cradle	The managers of the CHG are enthusiastic about the fabrication of a new cradle for the <i>Little Dirk</i> . Tradespeople currently working on the water tank in the precinct have been suggested to quote for the job. Would need someone who has appropriate experience in building supports for delicate and deteriorating items.
Re-painting of outer hull timbers	Ideally this should be done in line with a previous known paint scheme for the <i>Little Dirk</i> when it was used in Shark Bay – however further research is needed on this. A re-paint would assist in weather protection.
Reconstruction of cartwheel stern starboard side	More of a long term goal, however selective reconstruction of the cartwheel stern would be a nice way to illustrate the original design of the <i>Little Dirk</i> . This may entail the introduction of new timbers – and would need to be done with great care to avoid further deterioration.



*Proposed location for 12 x 12 cover for Little Dirk and Albatross. Sue and Dudley Maslen indicating distance of cover, photos courtesy WAM*



*Roofing to be replicated for Little Dirk, photo courtesy WAM*

## **2.7) Workplace Health & Safety Issues**

The *Little Dirk* poses a partial hazard risk to anyone working in, or nearby, the vessel. There are sharp corners, nails, loose bits of timber, rusted components, and unstable surfaces. If possible, a safe work method statement should be done before any work on or near the *Little Dirk*.

## **2.8 ) Environmental Issues**

Given it is out in the open at present, hot weather should be expected in the warmer months. There is a risk of insects and snakes. Whilst the new planned shelter should hopefully prevent any water damage or pooling of water near the vessel, the vessel will not be fully enclosed and is susceptible to storm damage.

## **3.) SECTION 3: Interpretation plan and visitor experience**

### **3.1) Near the vessel**

The *Little Dirk* is currently displayed outside, uncovered, in the maritime heritage section of the CHG precinct. There is one interpretive panel mounted on the steel base forward portside of the vessel, however this is severely faded and none of the details can be read. So, at present, no legible interpretation exists near the vessel.





*Photos illustrating current display area for the Little Dirk, photos courtesy WAM*

The *Little Dirk* will soon have a 12 metre by 12 metre cover installed for the vessel and the CHG are enthusiastic to re-do interpretation near the vessel once this is in place. They intend to also place another vessel alongside the *Little Dirk*, the *Albatross* – a Naval Cutter built in 1946 at the Garden Island Dockyard in Sydney. Pending how much room there is under the shelter once both vessels are in situ, interpretation panelling could be run along one side of the *Little Dirk* focusing on its design, usage, and significance.

Three of the rigging components of the *Little Dirk*, the mast, boom, and bowsprit, would also work nicely as associated components in the shelter. Ideally, they would be covered from any weather exposure. There is the potential that these items may lay in the central sections of the *Little Dirk* if they are well supported and do not cause any further deterioration to the vessel. The rigging from the *Little Dirk* would also work as good prompting objects to explain traditional wooden boatbuilding practice, as would components from the *Little Dirk* itself. This focus area could be considered as part of the updated labelling.

### **3.2) In the main museum**

Most displays in the museum are permanent, and there is no plan for the changeover of objects or content at present – however the CHG caretakers are open to new ideas. The main themes covered in the museum focus on shipping and trade at the One Mile Jetty, the Sydney Kormoran Battle, the 1961 Flood, local industry in Carnarvon, histories of whaling, the wreck of the *MV Korean Star*, and social life in Carnarvon.





*Photos inside One Mile Jetty Museum, images courtesy WAM*

A panel, or small display inside the museum focusing on fishing in the Shark Bay region and traditional wooden boat building could be a nice way to unpack the historical context of the *Little Dirk* and link to the vessel outside. As an alternative option, a selection of the rigging components could be displayed inside as items associated with the *Little Dirk*, even temporarily in the front entrance area which has more free space. A small interactive touch screen could be incorporated in the museum to show the 3D photogrammetry model of the *Little Dirk* and allow visitor to closely examine internal components.

### **3.3) Digital and Online**

The One Mile Jetty Precinct webpage has recently been upgraded with an appealing modern design. The *Little Dirk* is not currently shown on the webpage and should be considered as part of a historical vessels subpage that also includes the *Pelican* and the *Kormoran* lifeboat. The *Little Dirk* and the *Kormoran* lifeboat are both listed on the Australian Register of Historic Vessels, and an application is currently underway for the listing of the *Pelican*. The potential listing of all three on the ARHV gives the vessels' larger national significance and adds potential justification for them to have their own section on the webpage. Where available, historical photos of each vessel could be included and the 3D photogrammetry model of *Little Dirk*, and hyperlinks to each vessel ARHV page.



*Little Dirk 3D photogrammetry model, image courtesy WA museum*

3D Photogrammetry Link: <https://skfb.ly/pH17W>

### **3.4) Public programs/Events**

A launch event or morning tea for the *Little Dirk* and the *Albatross* once they are in place under the new shelter would be apt. This could ideally be timed with some new interpretation down by the vessels and/or a small display including the rigging in the front section of the museum.

### **3.5) Sponsorship and Promotion**

Given *Little Dirk's* past involvement in the Shark Bay fishing industry, a partnership or one-off donation from a local fishing company to the CHG would be a nice gesture of support. This could encourage the promotion of the history of fishing in Shark Bay, and go some way to fund future maintenance and interpretation projects.

- Bibliography & Appendices

‘Interim report on the survey and assessment of the 30’ cutter *Little Dirk*’, prepared for the *Maritime Heritage Association*, by Ross Shardlow July 2001. Provided to WAM by Ross Shardlow in February 2026 in advance of the March 2026 visit to Carnarvon.

*The MHA report has been a great point of reference during the development of this VMP, and due recognition and appreciation is given to the individuals who contributed to this report*

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