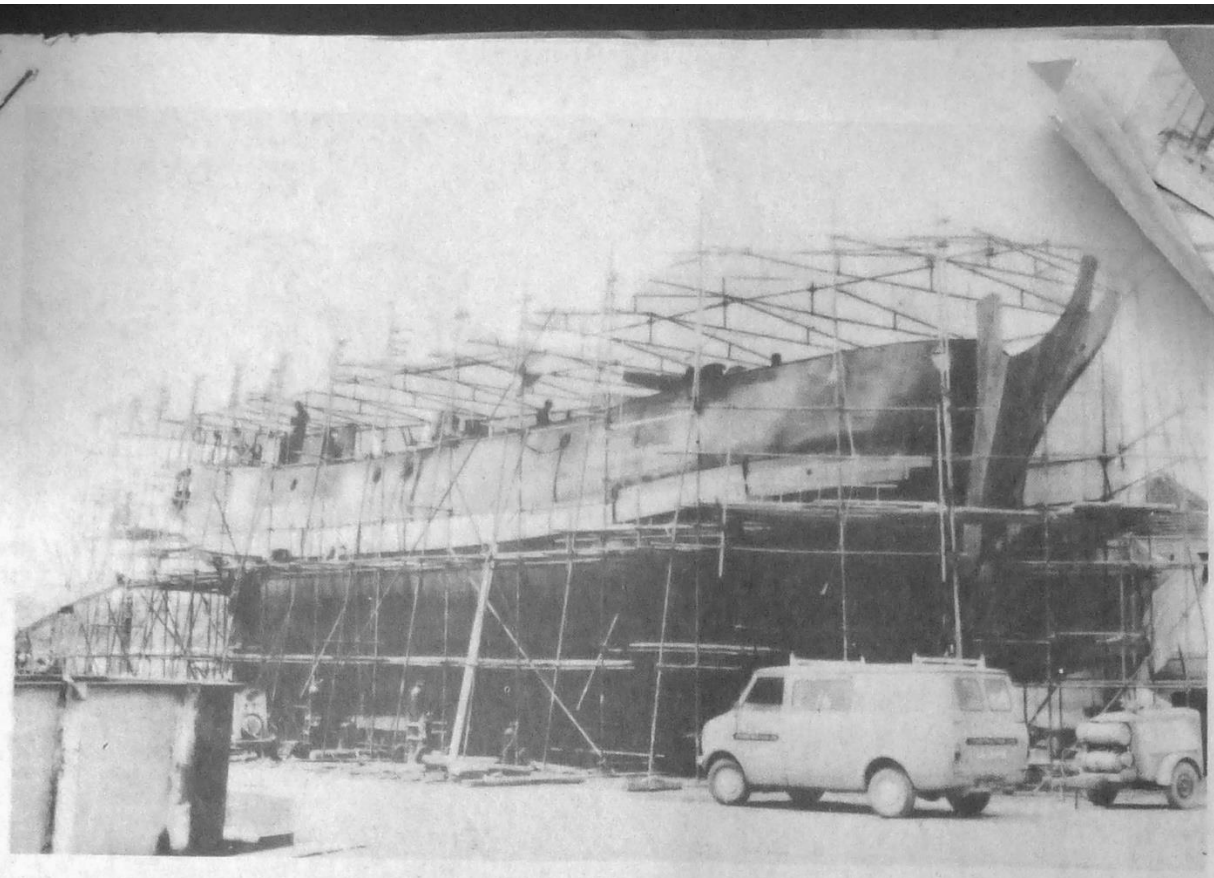
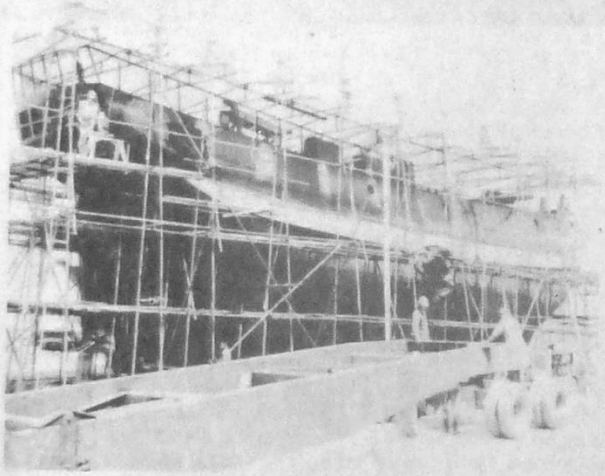


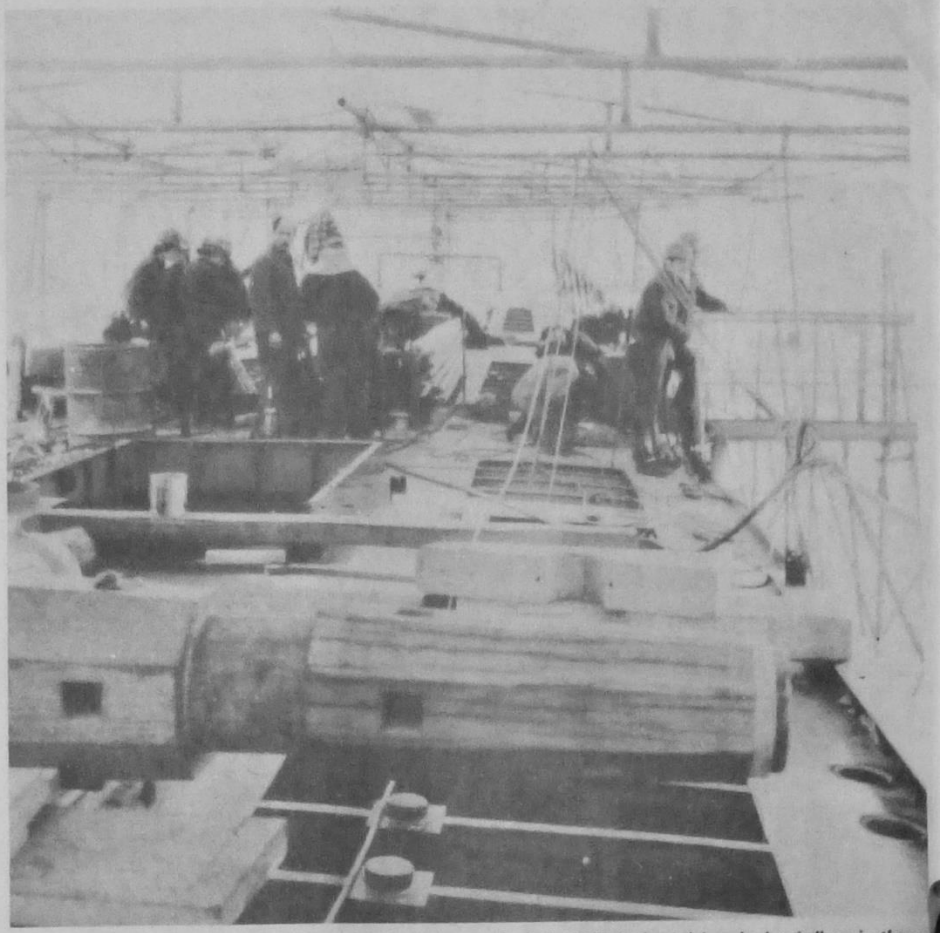
The Bounty, in bow and stern view, being built at Whangarei Engineering's yards in an "all-weather" situation under a huge plastic covering.



Story and photos
by
Max Avery

REBUILDING THE BOUNTY

When I first stepped onto the deck of the Bounty in Whangarei last month I thought: "How small she is!"



Steelworkers on Bounty's main deck, with the port end of the 17ft horizontal iron bark windlass in the foreground.

Although I had not given her size much thought before, I had somehow imagined that Bligh's Bounty, the venue of the best-known mutiny in the Royal Navy, was a substantial ship.

Well, the replica of the little Brixton collier being built by the Whangarei Engineering Company may not be substantial in terms of overall measurements, but she certainly is substantial in terms of construction materials, steel hull, three-inch mahogany sheathing.

Her hull has been completed—and what a hull! The Bounty is as homely as a hearthside. Her shape is almost comely, certainly rotund, with bluff bows, and a very definite sternward sheer. A tub with tumblehome.

Only her square stern is a little out of keeping with her curvy lines, but when she is completed I expect the proper image will be retrieved by her stern-lights—large, opening ports, each divided into eight little panes.

When project superviser Grant Ford showed me over the Bounty WECO staff were fitting her out below decks, and Whangarei boat builder Ces Watson, who built her two 24ft launches, was busy fastening teak planks to her exterior topsides.

While the Bounty is a compromise between practicality and authenticity, the practicality bit is cunningly tucked away out of sight. In fact, it is limited to the metal hull, twin 450bhp eight-cylinder Kelvin diesel engines for increased manoeuvrability and getting to film locations on schedule, and an electric windlass to handle the catted anchors.

Ces Watson is disguising the metal hull from the waterline up with two layers of one-and-a-half inch teak planks, each eight inches wide. The first layer of planks is bolted on with stainless steel bolts spot-welded to the hull, and the second layer is fastened with bronze screws. Then the planks are caulked in the traditional manner—but with cotton, rather than oakum.

The Kelvins are to be mounted on hard rubber blocks to eliminate synchronous vibration which might give the game away, and their exhaust systems have been fitted with special scrubbers imported from the United States to absorb carbon, leaving only hot, and hopefully invisible, gases to be exhausted. In any case, a sophisticated valve system enables the exhausts from both engines to be discharged at the waterline on whichever side of Bounty is not being filmed.

Single-lever hydraulic control systems will be concealed in a binnacle alongside Bounty's wheel.

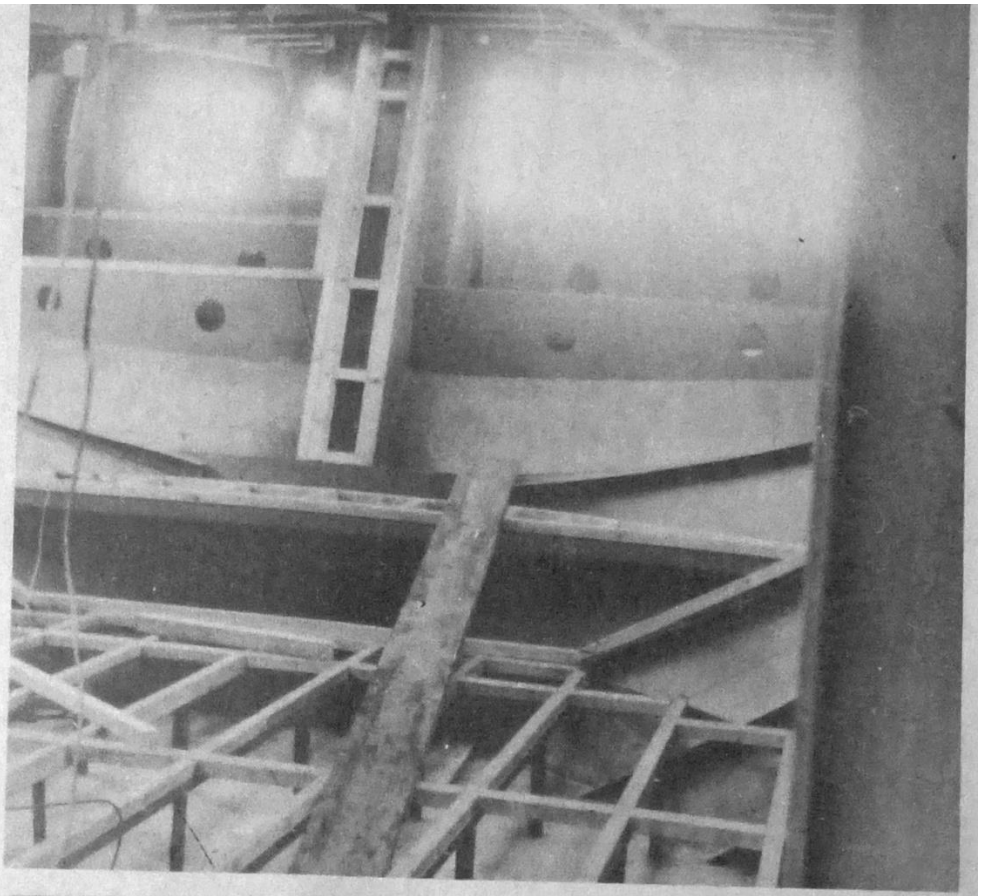
The electric windlass concealed below decks is there for safety—to speed up letting go and recovering anchors. But above decks, authenticity is the keynote, and Bounty's anchors can also be handled by a replica of the 17ft long man-powered pawled windlass. Made from iron bark, also by Ces Watson and his sons, the eight-sided tapered windlass has 60 squared holes to take the hand-spikes used to turn it.

Being a special-purpose vessel, the Bounty below decks is tailored to suit the needs of the film crew who will be living aboard her during the making of The Lawbreakers and The Long Arm—the film is to be directed by David Lean and which will tell the story of the famous mutiny from the commissioning of HM Armed Vessel Bounty to the trial of those of the mutineers who were eventually captured by the complement of HMS Pandora.

There is a generator room, concealed electric power outlets on deck, and a camera room. Another practicality is the built-in anti-fire system, by means of which the engine-room, generator room and camera room can be flooded with a seven per cent concentration of C02 from a central point—and all without danger to the occupants.

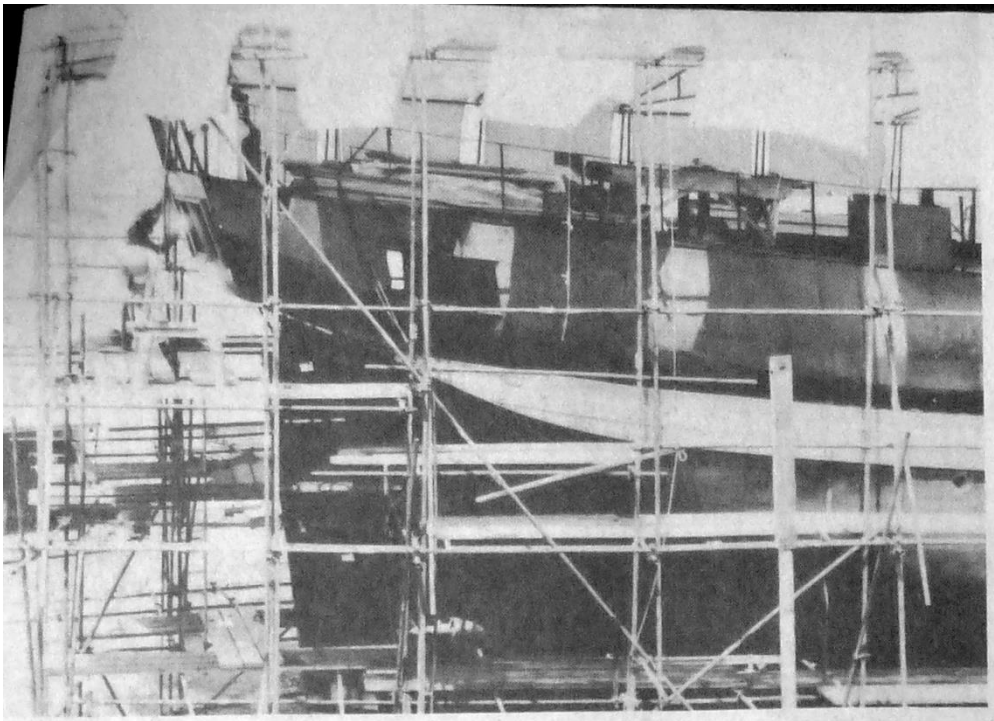
Otherwise, from her wooden tarred deck up, Bounty will be very much as she was when Lt Bligh set sail, pacing a poop which was common with the main deck and little larger than a lounge.

The Watsons have just completed Bounty's wheel, 64 inches in diameter, eight-spoked and turned from the finest teak. Neatly butted, tabled and glued together, weighing more than 50kgs, it will be secured to the rope drum by four bronze bolts, and will turn in an iroko wood pedestal, lubricated by tallow



Last month quite a lot of work remained to be done in the Bounty's great stern cabin which will be the home of director David Lean during the making of the two films.

Wally Watson fitting part of the teak rim to Bounty's 64-inch diameter wheel—a beautiful piece of workmanship, and typical of the high standard being achieved in the ship.



The Bounty's stern—a shipwright saws wood in the foreground while a steelworker welds behind him.

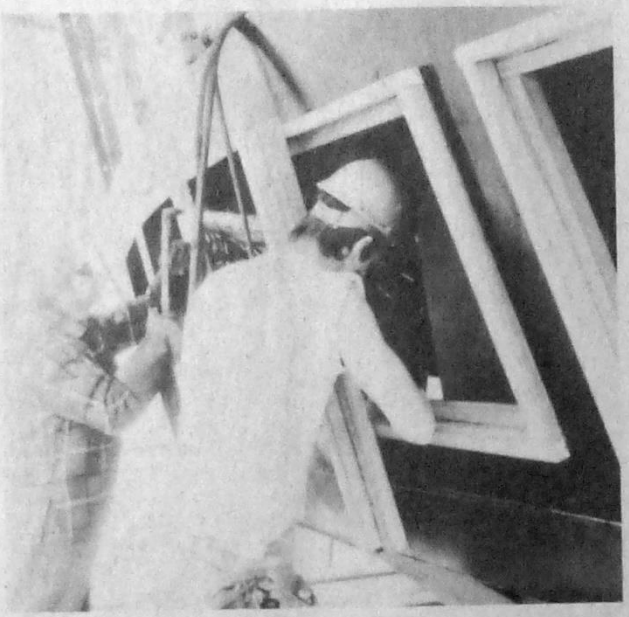
There will be three turns of the rope around the drum, and the ropes will go out to lead blocks in the bulwarks and back to the 12ft tiller, lying flat just above the deck, just like on the old Bounty.

The Watsons, one of six Whangarei manufacturers engaged in the Bounty project, will also make the channels for the Bounty. The channels hold the junction of chainplates and shrouds about 30 inches out from the Bounty's hull and will be made from solid matai. The mainmast channels alone are 17ft long—and since they protrude past the widest point of Bounty's hull, could make berthing the Bounty a ticklish task in some circumstances.

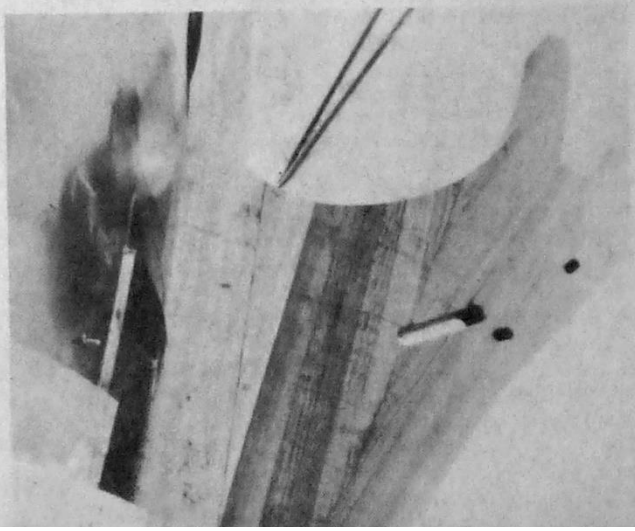
Smith's Boatyard of Whangarei made Bounty's stem bar and cutwater from matai and Australian bluegum. Made from more than 20 pieces of wood, varying from 12 inches to six inches in thickness, the massive cutwater is all that gives the ship's bluff bows some shape. It will carry her figurehead, and her bowsprit.

Mr J (Mac) McGuire, overseeing the construction on behalf of the owner, the Dino de Laurentiis Corporation of America, said the figurehead, a lady in riding habit, had yet to be placed on order.

He expressed himself satisfied with progress made to



Combined effort—while a welder uses an oxyacetylene torch to cut metal in the background, a shipwright fits the wooden frame of one of Bounty's sternlights—an example of the intermingling of craftsmen engaged in the project.



Bounty's massive matai and Australian bluegum cutwater, made from more than 20 pieces of wood.

Master boat builder Ces Watson fitting mahogany planks to Bounty's exterior. He was responsible for much of the traditional woodwork on the vessel.

date, was proud that Ces Watson had won the judge's special award with one of the Bounty's launches in the Auckland boat show.

In mid-October he received advice that the first parcel of rigging had been despatched from England in a container ship—a mode of sea transport Bligh and Christian could never have envisaged.

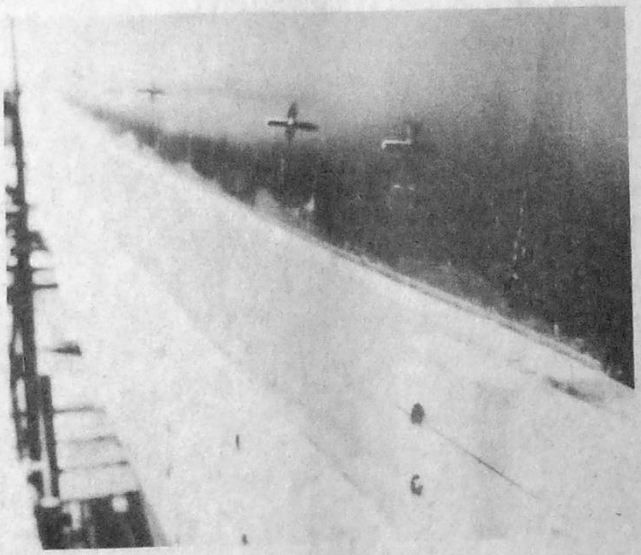
Mac McGuire is keeping the Bounty on schedule.

On December 9 there will be a mast-stepping ceremony, with a piece of silver being laid under each, according to tradition: "To represent the three countries involved, a United States silver dollar, a New Zealand silver dollar and an English silver crown will be used, one under the forward mast, one under the main, and one under the mizzen," he said. "Representatives of each of the three governments have been invited to be present."

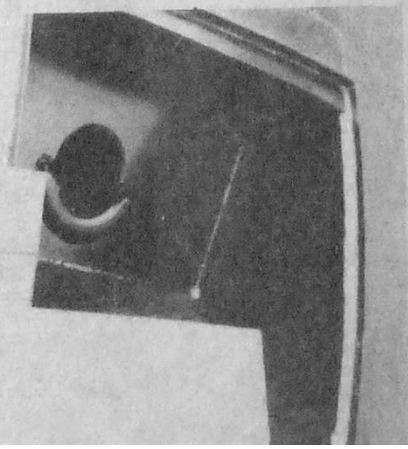
On December 16 the Bounty is to be launched by Mrs Thea Muldoon, wife of the Prime Minister.

Bounty's upper masts will be slung into place and her rigging then completed in time for sailing trials in late January.

Shooting of the first film will begin in September, 1979—and at least some of both films will be shot in New Zealand. Just how much is dependent on the extent to which director Lean will use the National Film Unit's new Avalon studios. Lean lieutenant Eddie Fowlie has reckoned that half of The Lawbreakers can be shot either in the Avalon studios or on New Zealand locations.

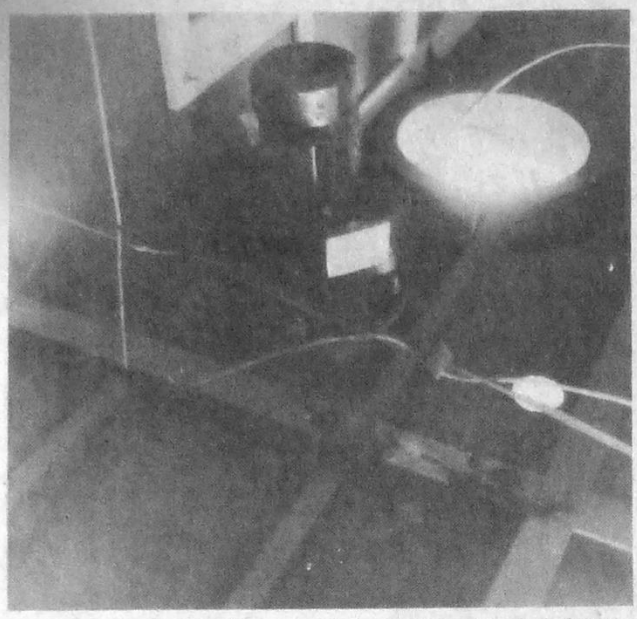


Detail of the method by which planking is attached to Bounty's steel hull—the first layer by stainless steel bolts, the second layer by bronze screws later plugged.

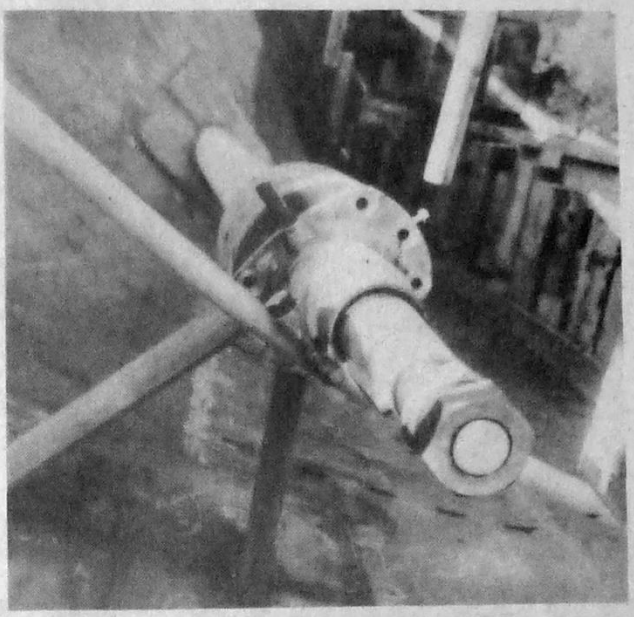


Two other factors will apparently also determine the extent to which the Bounty is seen around the coast of New Zealand during the making of the two films: Director Lean has yet to take a look at New Zealand's facilities and locations for himself, and Lean is apparently very much a man of his own decision. The other factor appears to involve Government policy on taxation paid by the top-level personnel involved in the films, and negotiations are said to be continuing on some grey areas there.

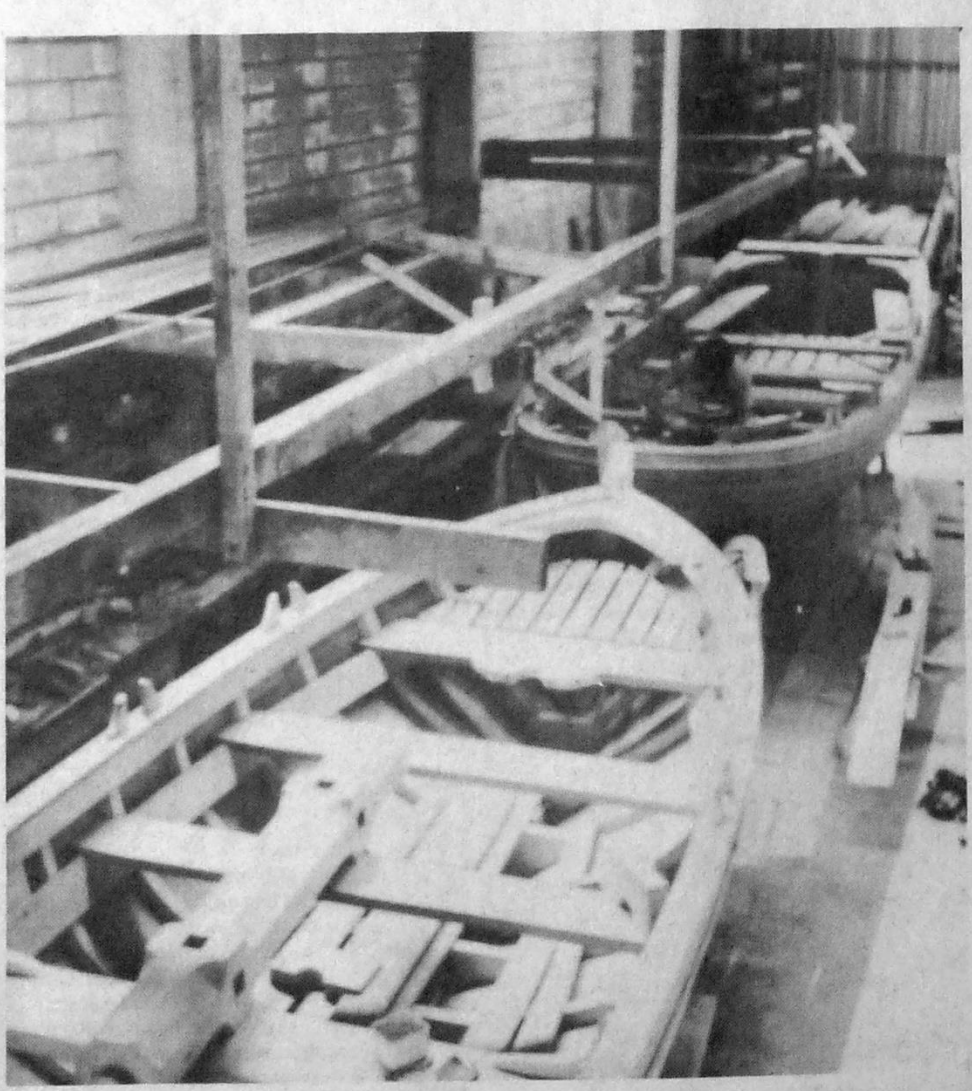
With the Bounty director Lean is unlikely to find fault, for New Zealand craftsmen, expert in both metal and wood fabrication, working side by side, have created the most authentic replica yet of that well-known ship, and in doing so further boosted the growing reputation of the New Zealand ship and boat building industry.



An electric windlass cunningly concealed under Bounty's main deck next to the mainmast. But so well detailed is the authenticity of the rigging above decks, experts will be working overtime to pick faults in this ship.



The original Brixton collier which became the Bounty in no way had—a propeller shaft.



Bounty's launches (one detail shot) receiving their finishing touches. One of the 24ft carvel-built craft won the judge's special prize at the Auckland boat show.