

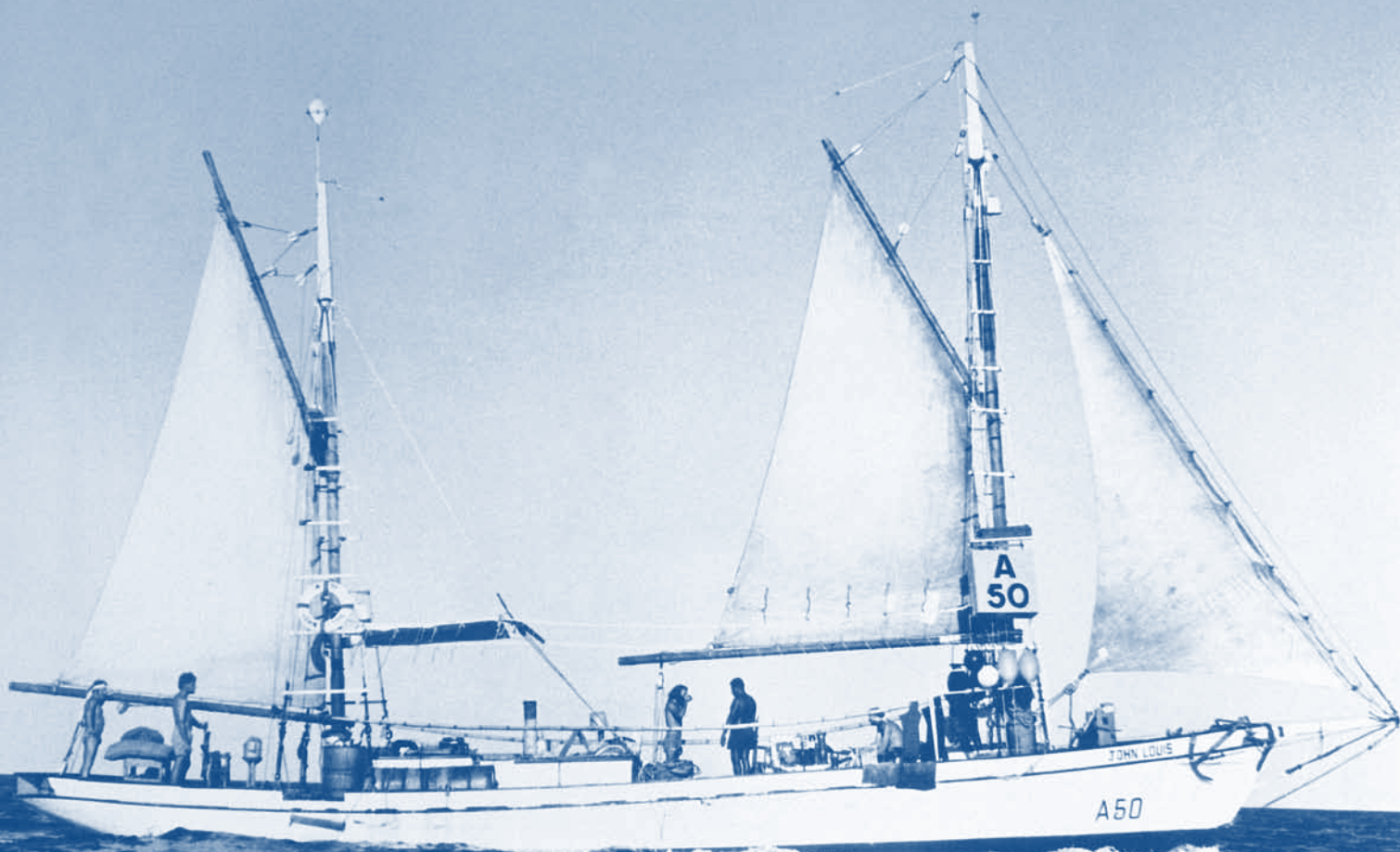
John Louis

Pearl shelling lugger

John Louis was built in Broome in 1957 using local Western Australian timbers. It was one of the last traditional pearl shelling luggers built.

The design of the Broome luggers evolved in response to the local environment, with the shallow draft and broad beam needed for the large tidal movements of the region. The crew, mainly Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Malay, or Japanese, slept and lived on the deck. Crew members worked tending the air hoses for the hard hat divers collecting pearl shell below. They cleaned the shell on deck. Pearl shell was a valuable material before the days of plastic.

In the 1970s the hard hat era ended. *John Louis* was modified for the growing cultured pearl industry and for the new form of diving called hookah, which used much lighter equipment. The foredeck was raised, forecabin accommodation built, the diesel engine replaced and an open wheelhouse and awnings were added. This is *John Louis*' configuration today.

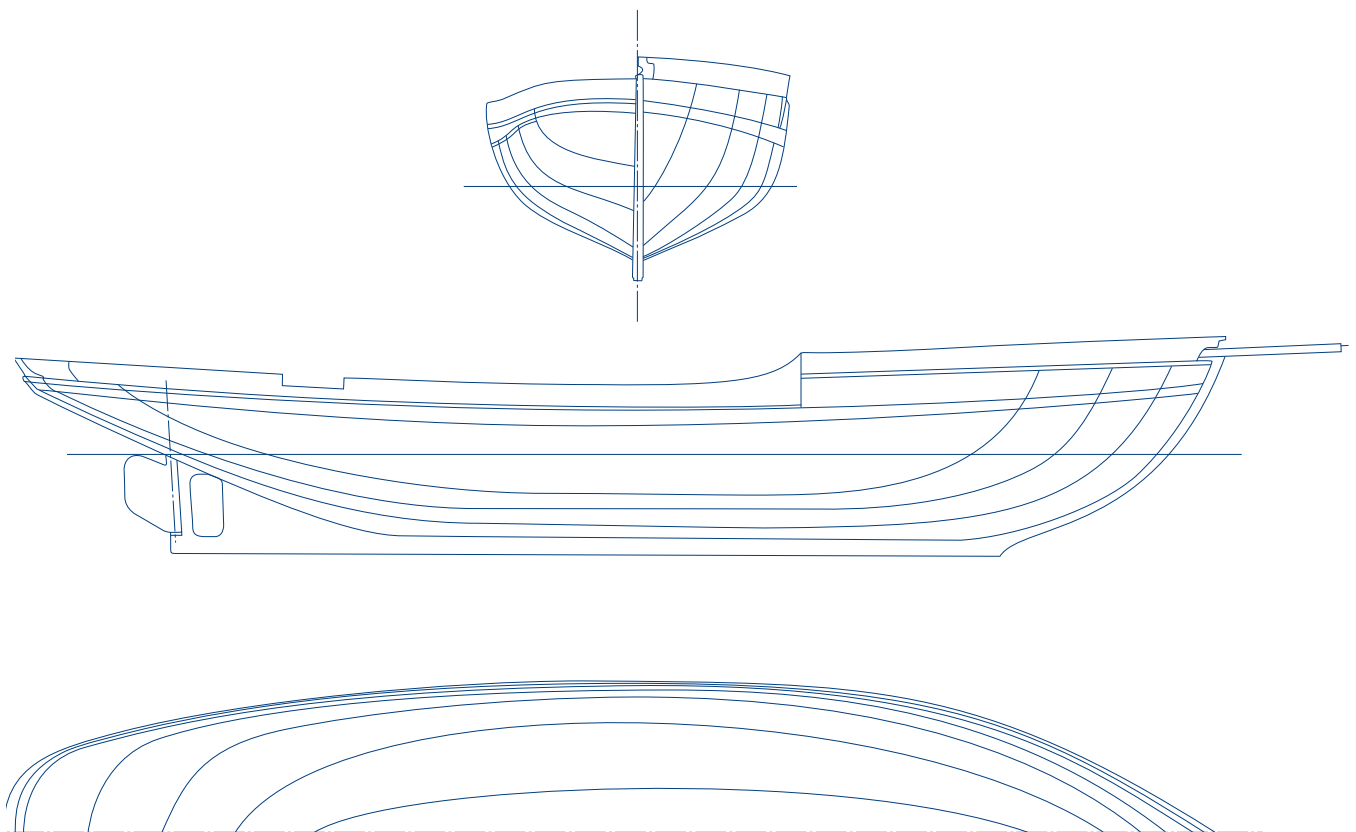


Specifications

Built 1957

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Length | 15.64 m overall |
| Breadth | 4.39 m |
| Draught | 1.73 m |
| Displacement | 35.6 tonnes |
| Builder | Male & Co, Broome, Western Australia |
| Construction | Carvel, jarrah planking, karri frames, white gum decks, oregon spars |
| Engine | 6-cylinder Volvo Penta marine diesel 78 kW |
| Sail | Auxiliary gaff ketch 58.27 m |

ANMM Collection



Front: *John Louis* with Torres Strait registration A50 in 1971 before its major refit Photograph ANMM Collection
Above: Plans from drawings by David Payne 1988 ANMM Collection