



The Mayflower Project,
72/73, The Wool Exchange,
Coleman Street,
London, E.C.2.

B U I L D E R ' S R E P O R T

The following is a brief report on building by Stuart Upham of J. W. & A. Upham Limited, builders of Mayflower.

It is a non-technical report, but Mr. Upham will be pleased to provide any further information to those who are interested.

1. FIRST THE ACORN

When looking at "Mayflower II" it is difficult for the layman to realise that all this mass of timber started with the acorn.

With the passing of the wooden ship, man has lost one of the most beautiful creations, because seldom in this age of specialists, can it be said that one craftsman handles the timber from the forest to the completed ship.

Every ship, large and small, has to be designed and from the design the lines have to be laid out on a floor to the full size and full size patterns made of all floors, frames, beams, knees, and all the many component parts which make up the whole.

2. HER COMPLEX LINES

"Mayflower II" was one of the most shapely and complex set of lines that the firm has ever laid down on the mould loft floor, and thanks to the diligence of Mr. William Baker, our American Architect, the trueness and accuracy has been of a very high standard.

With a wooden ship like the "Mayflower II", with so much shape, timber has to be especially selected, and in all cases the patterns which have to be made, have to be applied to the crooked timber which then has to be broken down, and sided and moulded to the patterns.

3. SEARCH FOR TIMBER

All this searching and selecting of timber has entailed an immense amount of work as some of the trees have weighed up to 10 tons, with an age of anything up to 200 years. The size of the timber has been very heavy, in fact it would be almost truthful to say it was one tree to one piece, which had to be worked truly and accurately.

4. TREENAIL FASTENINGS

The treenails (wooden pegs which fasten the planking to the frames) have been fashioned from Old Devon cyder casks, which we were most fortunate to find. It is essential that a treenail be dry and very seasoned, the reason being that if unseasoned timber is used this naturally shrinks and the vessel loses all the strength of her fastenings and will leak. As these casks are thought to be about 130 years old, they are ideally suited for this purpose.

These treenails, some of them 20" long, have to be driven by experienced Shipwrights, who have to strike a true blow or the treenail will naturally break. After a treenail is driven, it is caulked on the outside and wedged on the inside.

Once the ship is fastened she is then dubbed down and the seams are caulked with Oakum and paid up with pitch. This makes the vessel water tight and ready for launching.

5. SHIPWRIGHTS TASK

It was most difficult for the Shipwrights to manage such heavy timber on the staging, and it is most fortunate that she can be docked, where she can be completed without such high staging. This applies especially to the after end, which from the heel to the top of the taff rail is 40 ft. When one sees the elaborate shape of the bevels and the tumble home of the ship, one will realise the difficulties which have had to be overcome.

6. PRESENT STAGE

In her present stage she is built up to her tween deck and planked, with the heavy 5" whaling running right around her.

7. AFTER LAUNCHING

After launching "Mayflower II" will go into Dry Dock to have her main deck and superstructure erected.

The mast and spars are under way and all the standing and running rigging is in hand and so are her sails. The schedule of blocks has been worked out and the main deadeyes for the standing rigging will be seized into the main shrouds.

After the mast is stepped and the rigging set up; running rigging rove off; the yards sent up; the sails bent; all the points of chafe noted; and the baggy winkles made - the ship will be ready for trials.

September, 1956.