

The Explorer's vital statistics

Designed and built by	A. Hall & Co. Ltd, Aberdeen
Yard number	747
Launched	1955
Entered service	1956
Decommissioned	1984
Length overall	203 ft.
Beam	32 ft.
Loaded draft aft	17 ft.
Lightship displacement	915 tons
Fuel bunkers	270 tons
Diesel	34 tons
Fresh water	113 tons
Equipment	50 tons
Propulsion	Double-acting triple-expansion steam engine
Boiler	Scotch return tube
Fuel	Diesel/fuel oil
Power	1000 ihp (746 KW)
Max speed	12 knots
Range	8000 miles

The Ship's Company

Deck officers	4
Engineering officers	4
Scientists	9
Stewards	3
Cook	1
Deck hands	12
Ship's company	33



Launch
The SS Explorer was launched on the 21st June 1955 by Lady Rachael Stuart, wife of the then Secretary of State for Scotland. The ship cost £313,000 and entered service in 1956.

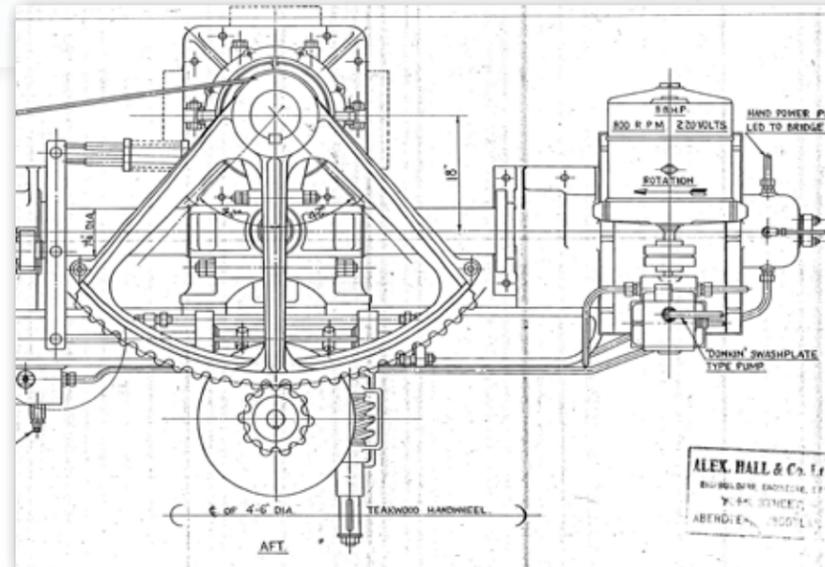


Lady Rachael Stuart

“Certainty and quality were watchwords employed at every level of the design and build.”

Steering and navigation

The steering system fitted to SS Explorer is electro-hydraulic, the telegraphs were electric and her navigation system was state of the art for the period with electronic gear such as radar, direction finder, gyro-compass and Decca Navigator sets fitted.



Detail of hydraulic steering gear



Bosun Joe Barrie at the wheel

The new research vessel

The Scottish Home Department commissioned a new ship to be built to replace the previous Explorer. She was to have the same name. The order went to A. Hall & Co. Ltd, one of Aberdeen's most famous shipbuilding firms. The new Fisheries Research Vessel Explorer was designed along the lines of a deep-sea side trawler of 203ft overall and with a beam of 32ft.

Accommodation

SS Explorer had very comfortable with centrally-heated accommodation for scientists and crew. There was a fully equipped galley and mess room, a forward recreation room for the crew and a spacious saloon for officers and scientists amidships.



The officers' and scientists' saloon

The entire accommodation was mechanically ventilated and the well-equipped hydrographic fish and plankton laboratories were positioned amidships below the bridge. There were two refrigerated fish rooms lined and fitted out in aluminium, one at a temperature of 30°F, the other at 10°F. The deckhouse contains the wheelhouse, captain's cabin, chart room, wireless room, wireless operator's cabin, a sick bay and a well-equipped galley.

A unique mix of old and new

From a technical standpoint, SS Explorer is a fascinating and unique mix of old and new technologies from a time when the very nature of shipbuilding in the UK was changing. For instance, her hull is made of riveted steel of ice-class strength for working in the exposed waters of the north, when many ships were beginning to use all-welded construction. Her upperworks are aluminium though, to reduce weight, and again riveting is used. Her large, vertical, triple-expansion steam engine was an anachronism, but fitted so that SS Explorer could tow large nets at low revolutions smoothly and efficiently - an advantage when testing and monitoring new fishing gear design.



The trawl winch today

Trawl gear and winches

Trawling gear was fitted on the starboard side, the port side originally being used only for survey work. Heavy gallews frames and sheaves were fitted in order that the largest size of trawl gear could be worked. Two electric hydrographic winches were installed on the port side and were used in conjunction with two Kemp davits which had depth and speed indicators. A steam plankton winch was installed on the boat deck aft. A steam anchor windlass was fitted on the forecastle head. Three types of echo sounders were included, the largest capable of sounding to 4,500 fathoms.

