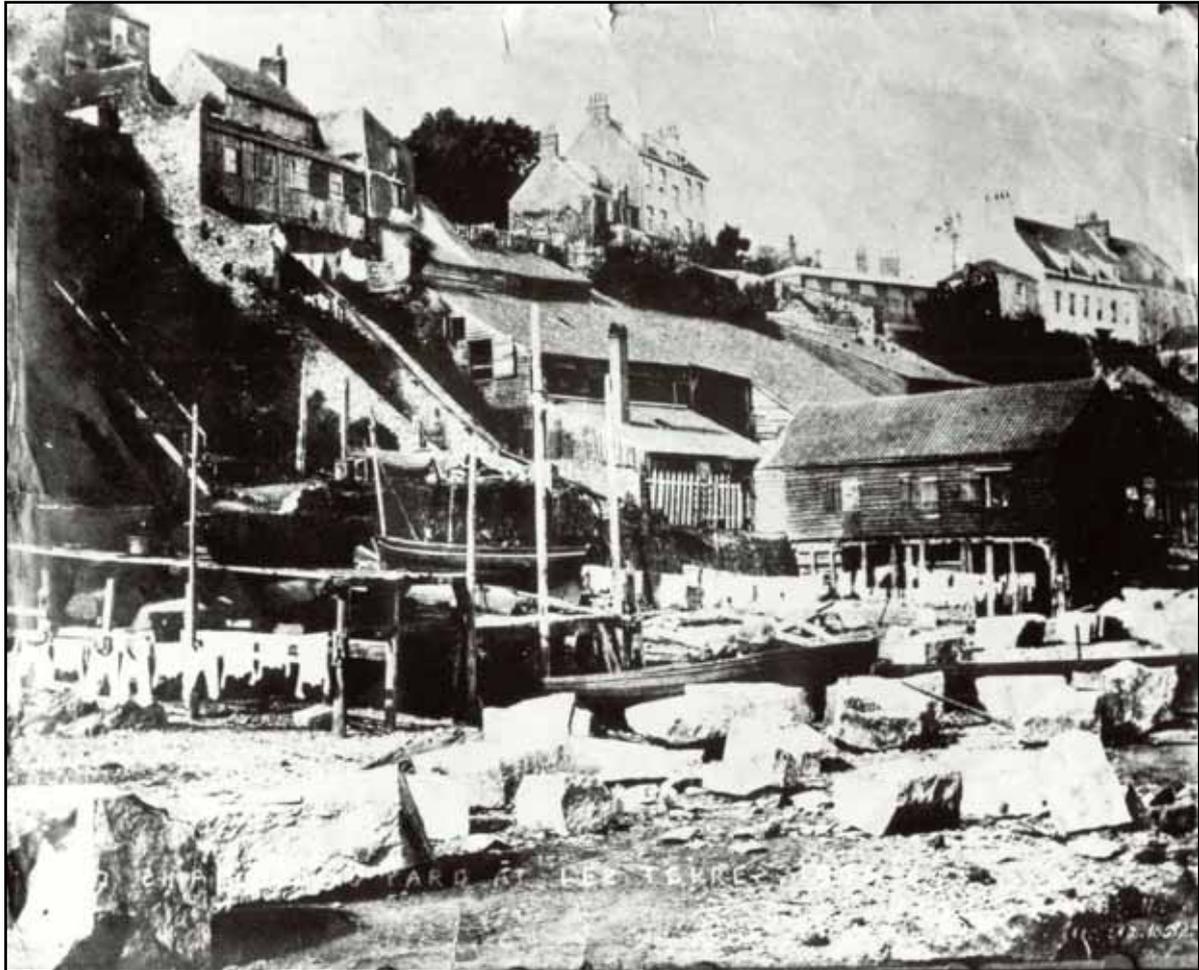


# SHIPBUILDING

Over the centuries, Guernsey has seen the rise and fall of many industries, although perhaps none more dramatic than that of ship building. In recent times there has been a revival in the building of small pleasure craft, but this in no way compares to the scale of the 19th century operations which employed vast numbers of men. The vessels which were built locally ranged from small fishing boats to fully-rigged ships destined for the tea trade of China and the coffee trade of South and Central America.



**Boatyards along the South Beach, St. Peter Port. 1850.**

The boom years of ship building on Guernsey were from about 1815 to 1880. During that time there were over twenty boat yards in operation which between them produced a total of over 40,000 tons of shipping.

## The Yards

Just as the complexity of vessels varied enormously, so did the yards in which they were built.



**Boat yards on 'Le Galet Heaume', St. Peter Port. Cigarette card image from a Peter Le Lievre print of around 1829.**

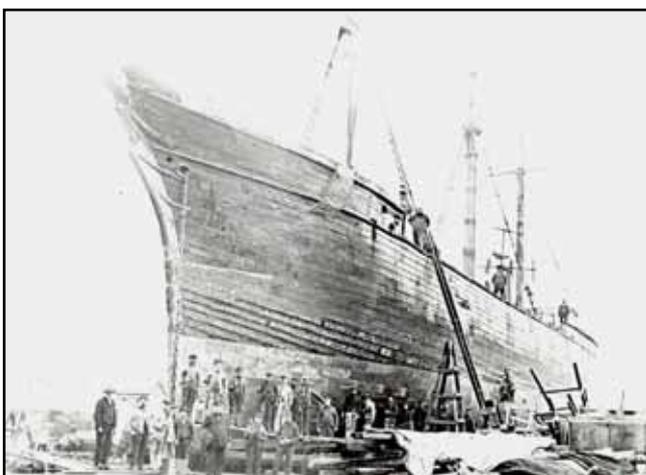
The simplest 'yards' were those that used the open beach head area and at best would have consisted of a wooden slipway with a small store nearby. Launching boats from yards such as these would have taken place at a suitable high tide. These yards could be found at many locations around the island, but in particular at Les Echelons and Le Galet Heaume now known as the South Beach ( which stretches from the bottom of the Valle de Terres to the Castle Emplacement ), Bordeaux and Grande Havre.

Until the 1850's, the Echelons, or 'Galet Heaume' as it was known, consisted of a rocky foreshore.



**Boat sheds and wooden slipways along the South Beach or 'Les Echelons', St. Peter Port. Circa 1854.**

The building of the new sea wall and subsequent land reclamation in 1854 caused the demise of these yards.



**The Barque 'Courier'. Built in 1873 by Peter Ogier. St. Sampsons.**

As larger vessels were constructed, it was necessary for yards of greater sophistication to be developed. W. Machon's operation at 'Galet Pollet' ( the shingle beach at the lower end of the Pollet ) was one such concern. This was again situated on the beach head but with all the attendant buildings that were associated with larger concerns.

The most impressive ships were built in these much larger yards, most of which were in St Sampsons and the Piette - Longstore areas of the coastline although the notable exception to this rule was the big yard of Barry Le Patourel which was, for

some time, situated nearer to St Peter Port. These yards were often a little way from the water and usually separated from the beach by a road. This meant that they were easily accessible from land which enabled the delivery of heavy materials but were still close enough to the sea to make launching reasonably straightforward.



**A shipyard crammed in-between two buildings with a completed vessel ready for launch through a hole in the seawall. 1850. St. Peter Port.**

The bigger operations comprised an open yard with a variety of buildings and a slipway. Aspects of this were not permanent with some yards having to erect completely new wooden slipways for every launch. Although few records survive to tell us much of the yard structure, it is likely that some erected tall canopies to protect the men and vessel during construction. One such example was Ogier's yard. A photograph of St Sampson's church in the 1860's clearly shows Ogier's yard with a vessel under construction. Above it, and dwarfing the church in the foreground, is a large canopy held up by tall poles.

At the Piette, in what was Dredge's yard and later St John's Mills, was de la Mare's shipyard. Today the site is owned by Gould's transport company but there is still evidence of beautifully preserved granite setts within the northern warehouse. On the beach opposite, the careful observer can still find remnants of the wooden piles that once supported the slipway. In operation until 1879, this yard produced many fine schooners and brigs.



**The Guernsey Steam Tramway Company. St. Peter Port, Late 1880s.**

The owner of the yard, George de la Mare, faced closure as a result of the arrival of another form of transport. In 1812, shipbuilders along the seafront had been granted the right to cross the road at launching. In 1879, however, the Guernsey Railway Company started running trams from St Peter Port to St Sampson's, and caused additional obstruction. A new sea wall was built and although Mr de la Mare raised the Clameur de Haro to protect his interests, it was to no avail.

Some of the most famous Guernsey vessels ever built were constructed around St Sampson's harbour. Here, several yards existed in the 19th century, although none so well known as that of Peter Ogier. Whilst he was not the most prolific builder (de la Mare built three times as many vessels) Ogier became known for his ingenuity and quality of construction. The site, today almost totally unrecognisable as a result of recent rebuilding, is the location of Kinnell de Putron, formerly that of Bird's coal yard. Until 1987 the yard was reasonably intact with a fine example of a sail loft adjacent to the road.

Guernsey's largest vessel, the 'Golden Spur', was built at this site in 1864. Some 200 feet (over 60m) in length and weighing 656 tons, this fine ship was designed for the China tea trade.



**Painting of The Golden Spur by P.J. Oules.**

Sadly the ship went on the rocks off Haiphong just 15 years later. The Guernsey Star reported:-

*'Hong Kong, March (no date) 1.45 pm. Golden Spur, ship of Guernsey is reported totally lost at Pakhami: the news requires confirmation. From a later telegram received by the Owners, we learn that the crew of the vessel were all saved and particulars will be forwarded, which we shall publish in due course.'*

The yard continued until 1924, although in its latter years it only repaired and altered existing vessels. Ogier made a brave attempt to keep abreast of modernisation in the industry. He produced Guernsey's only 'steamer', the *Commerce*, but unfortunately the end was inevitable. The island could not follow in the footsteps of the new moves towards iron-hulled vessels and even Ogier's yard was destined for closure.



**The Commerce. Built by Peter Ogier.**

There were a few ship yards that do not readily fit into the general description above. One such example was the yard of de Garis situated on high ground at Les Vinaires in the parish of St Peter. This yard built small fishing vessels and the owners had the task of towing them down narrow twisting lanes to the coast at Rocquaine for launching.



**Fishing boat *Champion* at the boatyard of James de Garis.**

One such vessel, the *Champion*, had the misfortune to sink shortly after launch. Most of de Garis' boats fared rather better however, spending many years fishing for mackerel in local waters and the English Channel.

The building of ships was clearly a specialised job, and expertise was not always available locally. Experienced shipwrights were frequently brought in from England and occasionally France. One family, Sebire, actually moved to the island from the Cotentin to set up business at the Houge à la Pèrre.

The last merchant sailing vessel to be built in Guernsey was the ketch *Sarnia* built in 1894.



**The ketch *Sarnia* at Peter Ogier's boatyard. St. Sampsons, 1894.**

She was built at Peter Ogier's yard on the South Side in St Sampson's and was 79 feet long, with a beam of 18 feet and a draft of 7 feet, and weighed 120 tons. A Guernsey Star correspondent present at her launch wrote '... Captain Samuel Gillman gave orders to slip the buoy ropes and, like a thing of life, the *Sarnia* leapt forth and at the first start proved herself able to sail close to the wind, for she went clear out without tacking.'

She was built for the Piprell shipping line and used for French trade, mainly carrying general cargo between St Peter Port and St Malo.

On 4 February 1897 she was returning from St Malo with a crew of 4 and 1 passenger when she ploughed into rocks northeast of the Ferrières. No lives were lost and at a later enquiry it was found that the captain was at fault and his certificate was withdrawn.

*Sarnia* was later salvaged and re-built and bought by Bird Bros, who sold her to W. Stranger in 1903. In 1905 she left Guernsey and was taken to the Scilly Isles. On 27 August 1910 she was finally and irrevocably sunk in a collision with a steamer off Lynmouth in Devon.

The barquentine *Morning Star* was built in 1874 by De la Mare at their Piette yard, St Peter Port. She was built for John Marquand & Co and traded to the West Indies, Brazil and the Gulf of St Lawrence ( Canada ). She is reputed to have been the last Guernsey-built ship engaged in foreign trade.

She was sunk in a collision off Cromer, Essex in 1906.

#### 19th CENTURY GUERNSEY SHIPBUILDERS

Please note: This list represents those vessels known at the time of research. New information suggests that the list is likely to be incomplete. Research is on-going.

<u>Ship-builder's Name</u>	<u>Yard Location</u>	<u>Vessels Built</u>	<u>Total Tonnage</u>
Brache - See Domaille & Brache			
Bichard, Charles.	Grand Havre,	4 cutters 5 smacks	172
Bowles, Samuel	St. Sampsons	1 brig	131
Brouard, Peter	St. Peter Port	1 schooner-brig	135
Brouard, Thomas John	Piette, St. Peter Port	1 schooner?	108

<u>Ship-builder's Name</u>	<u>Yard Location</u>	<u>Vessels Built</u>	<u>Total Tonnage</u>
<b>De La Mare, Thomas</b>	South Beach, St. Peter Port	2 ships 6 barques 9 brigs 1 schooner-brig 1 schooner 1 cutter 2 smacks	3,986
<b>De Garis, Nicholas</b>	Vale	1 cutter	62
<b>De La Mare, George</b>	Piette/Longstore, St. Peter Port	1 barquette 2 schooners	387
<b>De La Mare, John &amp; George</b>	Piette/Longstore, St. Peter Port	1 ship 4 brigs 2 brigantines 2 schooners 1 schooner-brig 1 dandy	2,600
See also <b>Henry Marquand &amp; John De La Mare</b>			
<b>De La Rue - See Sebire &amp; De La Rue</b>			
<b>De Putron, Matthew</b>	Gategny, St. Peter Port	5 brigs 2 ketches 1 dandy	1,422
<b>De Putron, Matthew &amp; Peter Vaudin</b>	South Beach, St. Peter Port	1 barque 3 brigs 9 schooners 2 smacks	1,429
<b>Domaille &amp; Brache</b>	North Side, St. Sampsons	1 barque 1 brig 1 brigantine 1 cutter	835
<b>Domaille, Nicholas</b>	Grand Havre	7 cutters 4 smacks	728

<u>Ship-builder's Name</u>	<u>Yard Location</u>	<u>Vessels Built</u>	<u>Total Tonnage</u>
Jones, William	South Beach, St. Peter Port	2 barques 2 brigs 6 schooners 6 cutters 1 smack	1,851
King, D.	Gategny, St. Peter Port	3 cutters	81
Le Cheminant - See Rankilor & Le Cheminant			
Le Maitre, George	Not known	1 gaff	10
Le Maitre, John & John Sauvary	St. Sampsons	1 cutter	26
Le Patourel, Barry	Gategny, St. Peter Port	1 ship 1 barque 8 brigs 1 schooner-brig 2 schooners 2 cutters	2,337
Lidstone, Nicholas	St. Sampsons	1 brig 2 schooners 1 smack	390
Machon, William	Pollet, St. Peter Port	1 barque 6 brigs 2 brigantines 5 schooner-brigs 11 schooners	2,978
Marquand, Henry & John De La Mare	South Beach, St. Peter Port	4 ships 1 barquetta 5 brigs 12 schooners 1 cutter 1 smack 1 yawl	4,395
Martin, John	St. Peter Port	1 smack	28
McKane, James	Pleinmont	1 cutter	9

<u>Ship-builder's Name</u>	<u>Yard Location</u>	<u>Vessels Built</u>	<u>Total Tonnage</u>
Ogier, Peter	St. Sampsons	6 brigs 4 brigantines 3 schooners 1 ketch 4 cutters 2 gaffs	3,484
Perrett, James	South Beach, St. Peter Port	2 schooner-brigs 3 schooners 2 cutters 4 smacks	623
Rankilor, George & John Le Cheminant	South Side, St. Sampsons	1 barque	259
Sauvary, John	North Side, St. Sampsons	4 schooners 2 cutters	403
Sebire, James & Denis De La Rue	Hougue a la Pere, St. Peter Port	1 barque 7 schooners	654
Sebire, James	Hougue a la Pere, St. Peter Port	2 ships 5 barques 2 brigs 1 brigantine 2 schooners	3,808
Smith, William	Not known	1 ketch	43
Spurway, William Newman	Gategny, St. Peter Port	1 brig 3 schooners 1 smack	554
Stonelake, Robert	South Side, St. Peter Port	1 brig 1 brigantine 9 schooners 1 ketch 1 cutter 2 smacks	1,395
Sullock, Thomas	Gategny, St. Peter Port	1 cutter	32
Thom, Alexander, Senior & Junior	Piette, St. Peter Port	2 ships 3 barques 17 brigs 1 brigantine 1 snow 8 schooners 2 cutters 4 smacks	6,249

<u>Ship-builder's Name</u>	<u>Yard Location</u>	<u>Vessels Built</u>	<u>Total Tonnage</u>
Thompson, Thomas	Gategny, St. Peter Port	1 cutter	21
Vaudin, John	South Beach, St. Peter Port	5 brigs 1 cutter	843
Vaudin, Peter - See De Putron & Vaudin			