



A BRIEF HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MARINE ANCHOR

Mariners take it for granted. Landlubbers seldom give it a thought. And yet the Anchor has become a symbol of the very sea itself. On this one page, we hope to give you a brief history of its development.

Primitive & Ancient

When man first invented the boat and took to the water, he soon discovered that tides, currents and winds often took him where he didn't want to go. And this was particularly irritating when he wanted to stay right where he was. So he invented the anchor. The first anchor (and it seemed like a good idea at the time) was simply a heavy stone tied to a crude rope. Several lost boats later, grooves were cut into the stone to stop the rope from slipping off.

But weight alone was not enough to hold a boat in one place for long. An efficient anchor needed some kind of hooking device. So the early boatmen added wooden crosses or iron hooks to their stones to increase the holding power. These "killicks" are still used by primitive peoples around the world. The Chinese developed true hooking anchors 4000 years ago - and they're still standard equipment on Chinese junks! Double-armed anchors with opposing stocks were known to the ancient Greeks in the 8th century B.C., and a Sardinian Scarab dated 650 B.C. shows a stockless double-armed anchor, thought to be the first anchor made of iron. Three or four hundred years later, vessels of the Athenian Navy were carrying iron anchors weighing nearly 500 pounds. And at about this time came the first rudimentary palms. Ships could now drop anchor, and reasonably expect to stay where they were. But there were still plenty of improvements to be made.

British Anchors

The Britons were late starters in the anchor-making business - the earliest known British anchor is a mere 2000 years old! The first English iron anchors are said to have been forged in East Anglia in 578 A.D. They had very small palms, and were designed to be used with a wooden stock. The Bayeux Tapestry shows what could be the first imported anchor being carried ashore by the invading Normans. By this time anchor making was a growing trade, and anchor-smiths even had their own Patron Saint. Known as St. Clements 4th Pope said to have been thrown into the sea tied to an anchor. This was a then known form of execution.

In the 15th century, the Statutes of Genoa required a 1500 ton ship to carry twelve anchors weighing well over half a ton each. And the large, traditional Kedge type anchors with wooden stocks were seen on the ships of the great navigators of the day. Kedges were effective, but extremely heavy. And the development of iron stocks in the late 18th century didn't do much to solve the weight problem. But over the years gradual improvements took place. Better welding. Shorter shanks. Increased arm curvature. And by 1848 the Royal Navy had adopted the modified 'Admiralty' iron-stocked kedge. Meanwhile, however, work had been going on in other directions. Notably the development of a tumbling fluke anchor introduced in 1818 by one Lieutenant Belcher R.N. Cant-palms had been added to Belcher's design by a man named Trotman, and in 1852 a British Commission declared that the Trotman anchor was the best anchor of all. But its success was short-lived - due largely to the development of the Hawkins patent tumbling fluke stockless anchor. The great advantage of the stockless anchor is the ease of stowage in a hawse pipe; and today stockless anchors are practically the only type used on larger ships.