

White Star barquentines: sail cruising with authenticity

Christopher Dawson reports on a pair of 2,298gt Belgian-built sailing ships inspired by 19th century tea clippers

ONE of the more unusual and surprising ship owning and building enterprises of recent years — the more so as this sector seems so far to be thriving commercially — is the design and construction in Belgium of a pair of 2,298gt true auxiliary sailing ships for cruising. There are plans for two more vessels to the same hull design but with progressive development in detail in the light of experience. The 194-passenger ships are very much the creation of the Swedish-born, but Belgian-based, entrepreneur Mikael Kraaft, who has set up his own shipowning company, White Star Clippers, to operate them.

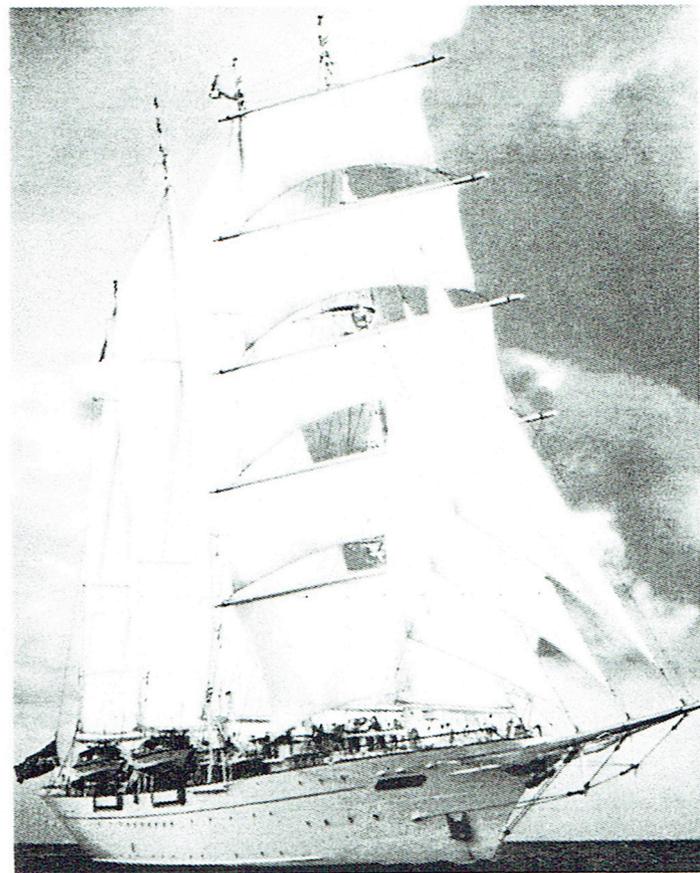
With a background in successful property development in Belgium, the owner is an enthusiast for the clippers of the 19th century, and an authority on them. He believes that there is a market for cruise ships which reproduce as many as possible of the characteristics of their famous predecessors, given that they have to meet modern safety requirements and carry passengers in considerable comfort rather than tea or grain. White Star Clippers acknowledges the work of the 19th century Scots-American clipper ship naval architect Donald McKay as an inspiration.

The first liner, *Star Flyer*, entered service in May 1991 and the second, *Star Clipper*, is due for delivery this month (March). *Star Flyer* is operating from Miami, the pattern being one- or two-week cruises in the Caribbean islands to no set programme with calls at anchorages chosen according to conditions rather than at busy ports. Typical passengers are, according to White Star Clippers, people with a knowledge of and interest in sailing ships, and they are given the opportunity to help work the vessels. Apparently some 70% are European, despite the US port of departure, and quite a number of repeat bookings have been made, even in the short period for which the ship has operated so far.

Star Clipper will be based in Monaco and operate to a similar pattern in the eastern Mediterranean. Both ships are, however, to be chartered as headquarters and accommodation vessels for organisers of the Belgian and Netherlands teams at the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games, and it is expected that members of the respective countries' royal families will also be accommodated aboard.

A figure of US\$80 million (£43 million) has been quoted as the cost of putting the two ships into service, but in view of the amount of innovation and the complexity of the contractual ar-

Aspiring to emanate tall ships of a past era: the 2,556 tonne displacement sailing cruise liner Star Flyer, completed last year by Scheepswerven van Langerbrugge for White Star Clippers. Her sister, Star Clipper, should be complete this month.



PRINCIPAL PARTICULARS

STAR FLYER and STAR CLIPPER

Length, oa (excluding bowsprit).....	96.07m
Length, oa (including bowsprit).....	111.57m
Length bp.....	70.20m
Breadth, moulded.....	15.00m
Depth, datum to bulkhead deck.....	6.50m
Depth, datum to weather deck.....	9.00m
Design draught	
(to underside salient keel).....	5.73m
Sail area.....	3,365m ²
Gross, approx.....	2,298gt
Displacement, laden.....	2,556 tonnes
Net tonnage.....	869 tonnes
Maximum speed under sail	
(according to conditions).....	15-17 knots
Maximum speed under power, approx.....	10 knots
Passengers.....	194
Crew.....	59 crew
Fuel.....	190 tonnes
Fresh water.....	199 tonnes

rangements with the various companies involved it would not be surprising if this were exceeded. The first ship sailed originally under the Belgian flag but it is understood that both will be transferred to the Luxembourg registry, no doubt making full use of the arcane niceties of both countries' versions of the EC-authorized ship owning and building subsidies.

The twins have been built by the Belgian yard of Scheepswerven van Langerbrugge, which lies on the canal system just north of Ghent. This firm, with Fulton Marine at Ruisbroek and Meuse & Sambre at Beez, near Namur, together make up the Belgian Shipbuilders Corp, set up in 1973. With a 500m frontage to the main Ghent-

Terneuzen ship canal, which can take large ships without air-draught restrictions, the Langerbrugge yard has a 140m side-launch berth. A 200m fitting-out quay on the Moervaart Canal at its junction with the main ship canal is served by gantries from the construction hall. The latter has a clear working area of 100m x 24m and rails for trolley transfer to the launch facility.

White Star Clippers has managed the construction project directly, working with the US-based naval architect Robert Macfarlane for hull design, also Dutch naval architects RAL (Richard Nugteren) and Olivier F van Meer, the last being responsible for the rig from concept to commissioning and trials. White Star has also employed its own contractors for various aspects of outfitting, notably Struik & Hamerslag for joinery.

Permanent ballast for efficient sailing

The hull has rounded sections with a bold flare and clipper bow, a long counter stern and little or no parallel mid-body. A box-section trunk keel projects just over 1m below the datum line, which is at this keel's intersection with the garboard strake amidships. In this keel are stowed 176 tonnes of square-section steel ballast pigs. There are also bilge keels. This arrangement provides adequate lateral resistance for windward sailing, and enough roll