

# Making Duyfken's traditional sails is no easy task



WE'D LIKE you to meet Peter Ripley (pictured left), the lead sail-maker for Duyfken – and one of the few remaining craftsmen in the world who can build traditional sails for square-rigged sailing ships.

It was much by chance that Pete entered the field of traditional sail making. Totally bored by an office job in his late teens, he found himself in the UK, learning the trade of traditional sail making at the James Laurence loft in Essex. With many more tall ships in Europe the demand for skilled sail makers who could both machine and hand sew was high, and so there was opportunity a plenty – and some good dollars to be made.

Having grown his expertise in this field it wasn't long before the call went out from Australia for Pete to return and assist in the building of sails for the replica of Cook's ship, Endeavour. Having completed 15 sails for Endeavour, Pete was soon in hot demand with a 21-sail order being placed for the restored James Craig, a three-masted, iron-hulled barque. In just a few short years Pete had become the go-to sail maker for those ship owners requiring traditional sails.

With Duyfken under construction in the late 90s, Pete was commissioned to put together the required sail wardrobe. To maintain the authen-

ticity of this replica, the chosen fabric for the sails was flax, a natural fibre that was used extensively on 16th century sailing ships.

As with much of the work associated with the building of Duyfken, hand skills were the order of the day...and so it was with the art of sail making.

The building of square-rigged sails has all the panels running vertically so that when underway the load from the wind goes on to the sails panels rather than the more vulnerable stitching. Much of this stitching must be done by hand. Once the panels are complete a length of rope, known as the bolt rope is then hand sewn round the outer edges of each of the sails, providing further strength to the sails when filled with wind.

Duyfken's sail wardrobe consists of a mizzen, a mainsail, a main top-sail, a fore-course, a fore-top, and a spritzil – and when all the sails are up and the wind is around 20 knots, Duyfken can hit speeds of 8-10 knots – quite remarkable for a ship of 100 tonnes.

To experience Pete's workmanship you're invited to sail aboard Duyfken on the Swan River during January 2015. What a great Christmas gift idea. Just visit [www.duyfken.com/sailing](http://www.duyfken.com/sailing).



## Letter to the editor

DEAR team,

The past two years since the Duyfken returned from the eastern states have been hard work. We had to completely rebuild the public profile and our volunteer base as the ship had not been based in WA for six years.

A large part of the success of our volunteer recruitment program I put down to the fantastic support we have had from *Have a Go News*.

On behalf of the board and indeed the whole ship's company, I want to thank you for that support which has made such a difference.

The fact that our wonderful captain, Robin Chester, who has made and continues to make such a contribution to the ship, first heard of our need through your paper is testament in itself to the success of the exposure you have provided for us.

I hope our relationship continues to flourish because although we are now in good order we can always use more volunteers, especially the calibre of people who come to us through *Have a Go News*.

Yours Aye

**John Longley AM CitWA**  
Chair, Duyfken Foundation