

# “... in every way a most useful and desirable property”: The 1827 Inventory of the Barque *Huskisson*

**H.T. Holman**

*This commentary notes the value and background of a rare document containing an unusually thorough 1827 inventory of the contents of a Prince Edward Island-built vessel.*

*L'article souligne également la valeur et le contexte d'un document rare qui contient un inventaire exceptionnellement complet de 1827 du contenu d'un navire construit à l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard.*

## **Introduction**

In June 1827 an advertisement appeared in the London newspaper *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* offering for sale “the remarkable fine new barque *Huskisson*.”<sup>1</sup> An expanded sale notice or handbill with a remarkably rich inventory of stores, supplies, and equipment was in all probability printed at the same time.<sup>2</sup> The details in the handbill provide a rare glimpse of the contents of a new Prince Edward Island-built vessel in the mid-1820s and are of particular value to material historians as the details given in the document can be found in few other sources.

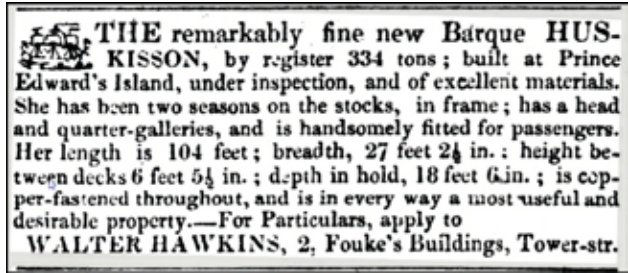
The last several years have seen a steady increase in the type and variety

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<sup>1</sup> *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* (London) 20 June 1827, 4. The notice was repeated in at least one additional issue of the newspaper and may also have been inserted in other papers.

<sup>2</sup> The wording of the advertisement and the handbill or poster appear to have been identical save for the inventory which appears only in the latter. The original document measures approximately 240mm X 400mm.

Advertisement for the sale of the barque *Huskisson*. (*Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, 20 June 1827, 4)



**THE remarkably fine new Barque HUSKISSON**, by register 334 tons; built at Prince Edward's Island, under inspection, and of excellent materials. She has been two seasons on the stocks, in frame; has a head and quarter-galleries, and is handsomely fitted for passengers. Her length is 104 feet; breadth, 27 feet 2½ in.; height between decks 6 feet 5½ in.; depth in hold, 18 feet 6 in.; is copper-fastened throughout, and is in every way a most useful and desirable property.—For Particulars, apply to **WALTER HAWKINS, 2, Fouke's Buildings, Tower-str.**

of easily accessible information available for researchers of nineteenth century nautical topics, especially in relation to British vessels. Historians owe much to the former Maritime History Group at Memorial University in Newfoundland whose work has resulted in the development of holdings in the Maritime History Archive at the University.<sup>3</sup> An even more ambitious collection of data and databases can be found at the volunteer-created Crew List Index Project (CLIP).<sup>4</sup> Although structured primarily as a finding aid for information about individual seafarers, the site serves as a gateway with links to, and finding aids for, resources relating to vessels, voyages, and individuals at over seventy repositories. This work has proceeded in a parallel course with the digitization of many essential records such as the Mercantile Naval List, the Record of American and Foreign Shipping, American Lloyd's Register of American and Foreign Shipping (the latter two from the collections at Mystic Seaport Museum),<sup>5</sup> and Lloyd's Register of Ships Online.<sup>6</sup> Most recently, the still-ongoing digitization of further resources at Lloyd's by the Lloyd's Register Foundation has resulted in that institution's incredibly rich holdings of reports, plans, photographs, forms, certificates, and correspondence being made available to researchers.<sup>7</sup> These resources allow for the tracing of vessel registrations, voyages, crew lists, and information and details of vessel construction. The resources are particularly rich for the last half of the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Memorial University, "About the Archive," Maritime History Archive, last modified April 2024, <https://mha.mun.ca/mha/about.php>.

<sup>4</sup> Pete Owens and Jan Owens, "About CLIP," Crew List Project, last modified 14 May 2024, <https://www.crewlist.org.uk/#CLIP>.

<sup>5</sup> Mystic Seaport Museum, "Home: Collections and Research," Mystic Seaport Museum, accessed April 2024, <https://research.mysticseaport.org/>.

<sup>6</sup> Lloyd's Register Foundation, "Lloyd's Register of Ships online," Lloyd's Register Foundation, accessed 14 April 2024, <https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/lloyds-register-of-ships-online>.

<sup>7</sup> Lloyd's Register Foundation, "Ship Plans and Survey Reports," Lloyd's Register Foundation, accessed 14 April 2024, <https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/ships>.

<sup>8</sup> It should also be noted that nautical research has also benefitted from other projects with broader intent. For example, the digitization of more than 67 million pages of newspapers

Shipping was, by some measures, a highly regulated industry, and the bureaucratic diligence in maintaining information required to comply with government legislation or with private requirements, such as those in the insurance industry, provide for a wide scope for information gathering and assessment. However, these resources are of limited value for some aspects of nautical research. A case in point is the area of material history and as we move from public to private interests the availability of resource materials shifts. While registration and survey reports can tell much about the fabric of ships, their materials, building techniques, and design, they can add relatively little to how life was lived aboard. What sorts of tools and equipment were to be found on a ship? What might a bosun or ship's carpenter have available to them? What were the common furnishings? Some of these things were in the province of the individual. A carpenter might be expected to have a personal supply to tools and the seaman to have his own clothing and effects. But what might a ship itself have by way of supplies and equipment not brought aboard by the crew? With few records in this area, it is difficult to determine what a typical ship might contain but even a single source can be of considerable value.

When ships were advertised for purchase or sale in the first part of the nineteenth century a statement was often found in the seller's notice that those interested should contact the broker for particulars or inventory. One might expect that the particulars would contain information about the ship itself, mostly relating to size, condition, and materials – much of this information mirrored what was in official records. However, of the inventories we know little. Few seem to have survived and they are among the wealth of ephemeral information contained in handwritten lists or notebooks that seldom escaped destruction.

Recently an unusual item appeared for sale at auction. An undated sale handbill of a Prince Edward Island-built barque included, in addition to the usual information touting the value of the ship, an inventory of the furnishings and equipment contained therein. Further research confirmed that the vessel named – the barque *Huskisson* – was one registered at the port of Bristol earlier in 1827, making the handbill just under 200 years old, an eternity for such an ephemeral document.<sup>9</sup> Both the advertisement in the *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser* and the poster or handbill appear over the name of Walter Hawkins

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through the site British Newspaper archive has provided much additional information of value for nautical research. See The British Newspaper Archive, "About," The British Newspaper Archive, accessed 14 April 2024, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/help/about>.

<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to collector and researcher Phil Culhane of Falmouth Nova Scotia for alerting me to the existence of this item. It is now in a private collection.

**FOR SALE**

BY

**Private Contract,**

THE REMARKABLY FINE NEW BARQUE

**HUSKISSON,**

334 Tons per Register; built at Prince Edward's Island, under inspection, and of excellent materials; she has been two seasons on the stocks, in frame; has a head and quarter galleries, and is handsomely fitted for passengers; her length is 104 feet, breadth 27 feet 2½ inches, height between decks 6 feet 5½ inches, depth in hold 18 feet 6 inches; is copper-fastened throughout, and is in every way, a most useful and desirable property.

*Now lying in the London Dock.*

*Hull, Masts, Yards, Standing and Running Rigging, with all Faults as they now lie.*

**INVENTORY.**

<b>ANCHORS.</b>	1 Spare top sail yard	1 Spinnaker winch & bolt	2 Mops
2 Bowers	6 Steering sail yards	4 Mats for rigging	6 Paint brushes
1 Stream	2 Pieces pump leather	2 Serving mallets	5 Paint pots
1 Kedge	A quantity sails	4 Scrapers	4 Oil jugs
<b>CABLES.</b>	1 Cross cut awl	5 Marline spikes	<b>COOPER'S STORES.</b>
2 Chain cables	1 Rope ladder	6 Hooks & shingles	4 Buckets
1 Towline	2 Hand holders	1 Tar brush	1 Keg
2 Warps	Dead lights complete	1 Tar bucket	<b>COOK &amp; CABIN STORES.</b>
1 Buoy rope	1 Pitch pot	7 Barrel tin	1 Hearth
<b>SAILS.</b>	1 Grindstone and trough	1 Cook black varnish	1 Calicoe louse
1 Jib	Hatch bars complete	10 Gallons bright varnish	1 Paker
1 Fore top mast stay sail	4 Tarpaulins	2 Ballast shovels	1 Shovel
1 Fore sail	12 Handspikes	1 Deck stopper	1 Frying pan
1 De. top sail	8 Capstan bars	1 Ribhead do.	1 Pair trowellers
1 De. top gallant do.	2 Boat's chocks	2 Outboard do.	1 Ladle
1 De. royal	Boat's lashings complete	10 Hammocks	1 Cook's axe
1 Fore spracer	1 Cwt. pitch	Room irons complete	3 Scaupans
1 Middle stay sail	1 Cwt. oakum	<b>SHIP CHANDLER'S STORES.</b>	2 Tea kettles
1 Main top sail	6 Chain hooks	1 Brass compass	1 Baking pan
1 De. top gallant do.	2 Shank painters	2 Wood compasses	1 Dyeing pan
1 De. royal	<b>BOATSWAIN'S STORES.</b>	1 Deep sea line	1 Cabin table
1 De. spracer	A quantity marline	1 Flax lead	1 Tray
1 Mizzen	Do. bussaline	1 Do. line	6 Chairs
1 Square main sail	Do. twine	1 Log	1 Lanthorn
1 Gull top sail	Do. spinnaker	1 Log reel	1 Gallon lamp oil
2 Lower steering sails	Do. rope yarn	1 Do. line	3 Tons coals
2 Top mast do.	Do. worming	4 Log glasses	6 lb. candles
2 Top gallant do.	1 Cat fall	2 1-hour glasses	1 Hearth brush
1 Water hose	1 Cat block	1 Speaking trumpet	1 Dyeing pan
<b>CARPENTER'S STORES.</b>	1 Top do.	1 Signal lantern	<b>PROVISIONS.</b>
1 Pump hook	1 Signal halyard	1 Knotter	1 Barrel peck
2 Pump leakes	2 Fish hooks, runners and tackle	1 Jack	<b>BOATS.</b>
4 Lower boxes	5 Double blocks	1 Forecastle lamp	1 Long boat
4 Spear boxes	5 Single do.	2 Scrubbing brushes	1 Skiff
6 Pump bolts	2 Bompkin do.	4 Brooms	1 Rubber
1 Sounding rod	5 Double-hull tackle blocks		1 Tiller
2 Lower steering sail beams	5 Single do.		6 Cans
4 Top mast do.	1 Iron bound snatch do.		2 Davits
4 Top gallant do.			

*The Vessel and her Stores to be taken with all Faults as they now lie, without any Allowance for Weight, Length, Quality, or any Defect whatever.*

For Inventories and further Particulars apply to

**WALTER HAWKINS,**

2, Fowke's Buildings, Tower Street.

(1787-1862), a well-known London ship and insurance broker, who was active between 1818 and 1848.<sup>10</sup>

This note provides a context for the document which has the potential to tell much about the inner workings of the ship and the crew.

## The Vessel

The barque *Huskisson* had been launched in 1826 from a shipyard in New Bristol (now Souris), Prince Edward Island. It was undoubtedly named for William Huskisson (1770-1830), a British statesman who was at the time President of the Board of Trade, a significant committee of the Privy Council responsible for trade and commerce including the Navigation Acts. Given his prominence, the name was a popular one with at least seven vessels built in the British North American Colonies carrying the name between 1825 and 1834.<sup>11</sup> However, only one of these vessels was rigged as a barkentine. In addition, several British-built vessels were also given the name Huskisson.

The vessel had been built over two seasons by Humphrey Dennis at the New Bristol yard. The build was undertaken for brothers Lemuel and Artemis Cambridge, who, with their father John, were among the largest shipbuilders, timber exporters, merchants, and landowners in the colony.<sup>12</sup> According to records at Charlottetown, the ship was not owned by the Cambridges but was built for them as agents for Francis and William Jepson Fisher (Fisher & Son) of Bristol. This may be the reason why the vessel was not registered in Prince Edward Island but was sent under certificate to be registered in Bristol, England the following year.<sup>13</sup> Bristol was a port of registry for a large number of PEI-built vessels during the period and that speaks to the strong connections between that port and Prince Edward Island. On 14 September 1826, *Huskisson*, in ballast, left Prince Edward Island for Richibucto, New Brunswick, quite probably to load timber for the United Kingdom.<sup>14</sup> It appears

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<sup>10</sup> Hawkins had a remarkably wide range of interests beyond his business activities and was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. See “Walter Hawkins (ship broker),” Wikipedia, accessed 8 February 2023, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter\\_Hawkins\\_\(ship\\_broker\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Hawkins_(ship_broker)).

<sup>11</sup> The index to the Canadian records has mis-transcribed the name of the vessel as *Huskinow*. See Library and Archives Canada, “Item: 32278: HUSKINOW,” Ship Registrations, 1787-1966, accessed 14 April 2024, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/ship-registration-index-1787-1966/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=32278&DotsIdNumber=>.

<sup>12</sup> H.T. Holman, “Cambridge, John,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography, accessed 14 April 2024, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cambridge\\_john\\_6E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cambridge_john_6E.html).

<sup>13</sup> See Board of Trade, General Register and Record Office of Shipping and Seamen – Ships Registry papers 1827 reel B-3656, The National Archives, Kew.

<sup>14</sup> *Prince Edward Island Register* (Charlottetown), 19 September 1826, 3. RG 9 Collector of Customs, Shipping Outwards Ledgers, 1826, Prince Edward Island Public Archives and Records Office, Charlottetown.

that once the barque left Prince Edward Island for Bristol it never returned to the colony.

The Bristol records give many details about the vessel: 334 tons, length 100 feet, breadth twenty-seven feet five-and-a-half inches, depth eighteen feet nine inches, three decks, three masts, barque rig, square stern. It appears that the vessel had some modification between the PEI launch and the Bristol registration as the former description states “no galleries, no figure head” while the latter notes “quarter galleries, bust head.” The owners at registration were Francis Fisher jr. and William Jepson Fisher, merchants of Bristol with equal shares.<sup>15</sup>

*Huskisson* appears to have been offered for sale again in 1832 as an advertisement in the *Liverpool Mercantile Gazette and Meyer's Weekly Advertiser* notes the offer of “The good Barque HUSKISSON of Bristol” with details which match those of the PEI-built vessel.<sup>16</sup> The purchaser in 1832 was John Acraman Jones, a Bristol timber merchant. There were several subsequent owners and, in 1834, it was registered anew with the same construction details but with a detail of the figurehead “man bust head” – presumably William Huskisson. The registry was cancelled at Newcastle in December 1836 but no reason is given.

*Huskisson* first appears on the supplement to the *Lloyd's List* of 1828 with the owners given as Fisher & S., suggesting that the attempt to sell the vessel in 1827 had not been successful or perhaps more simply that the Lloyd's listing did not have the most recent information. The late 1820s were a difficult period with depressed trade conditions in England beginning in late 1825.<sup>17</sup> The market for ships contracted dramatically. On Prince Edward Island the number of ships built remained relatively steady but many appear to have been sold at or below cost. L. and A. Cambridge became bankrupt in 1829.

In addition to the descriptive information in the handbill, the Lloyd's Lists provide some additional details of the vessel noting that it had been copper sheathed to protect the hull in 1827, that the hull was constructed of black birch, spruce, and pine and that there was a single deck with beams and that it appears to have had iron knees. Later Lloyd's records show that following an accident in the Severn in 1830 major repairs were made to the barque to return it to a high rating, and a detailed Lloyd's survey report detailing these repairs was prepared for the vessel late in 1834.<sup>18</sup>

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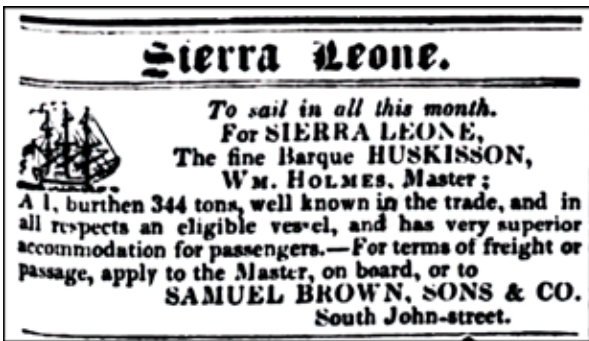
<sup>15</sup> Grahame E. Farr ed. *Records of Bristol Ships 1800-1838 (Vessels over 150 tons)* Vol. XV (Bristol: Bristol Records Society Publications, 1950), 136.

<sup>16</sup> *Liverpool Weekly Gazette and Meyer's Weekly Advertiser* (Liverpool), 20 August 1832, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Nicolas DeJong and Marven Moore, *Shipbuilding on Prince Edward Island: Enterprise in a Maritime Setting 1787-1920* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization 1994), 44-48.

<sup>18</sup> See, Lloyd's Register Foundation, “Huskisson,” Lloyd's Register Foundation, accessed

There are a number of references in the British press to vessels bearing the name *Huskisson* over the next several years, but as the name was used widely for both British and colonial-built vessels it cannot be ascertained with certainty how this particular vessel was used over its lifespan.<sup>19</sup> Successive Lloyd's Lists, which do note this specific barquentine, include reference to trips from London to Sierra Leone (1828 and 1829) and from Bristol to New Brunswick (1830).<sup>20</sup> This information is supported by newspaper advertisements which refer to voyages to Sierra Leone in 1828, 1831, and 1833,<sup>21</sup> and to New Orleans in 1831.<sup>22</sup>



A newspaper advertisement regarding one of Huskisson's voyages to Sierra Leone. (*Bristol Mirror* (Bristol), 1 November 1828, 2)

Although the sale notice states “handsomely fitted for passengers” and the auction listing for the document describes the broadside as “immigration sail ship poster” there is no confirmation that it was used for this purpose. There are no specific fittings or equipment relating to passengers in the inventory. However, this is not definitive as during the period immigration ships were frequently converted merchant vessels, often lumber ships, and accommodation was rudimentary and temporary at best. There appears to be no confirmation that the vessel was used for immigration purposes. No immigration advertisements concerning this vessel can be found in English newspapers. The vessel does not appear in the few surviving lists of immigration ships for New Brunswick and no notices concerning the vessel have been found in on-line versions of Quebec newspapers. Such records as do exist have significant gaps but there

14 April 2024, <https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/ships/huskisson-1826/search/everwhere:huskisson-1826/page/1>.

<sup>19</sup> Newspaper references include information about several voyages of a vessel named *Huskisson* between Jamaica and Bristol but this appears to have been a different vessel with the same name.

<sup>20</sup> This is my understanding of the Lloyd's coded abbreviations “LoSLeon” and “BrNBrunns.”

<sup>21</sup> *Bristol Mirror* (Bristol), 1 November 1828, 2; *Liverpool Mercantile Gazette and Meyer's Weekly Advertiser* (Liverpool), 12 September 1831 and 1 October 1833, 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Gore's Liverpool and General Advertiser* (Liverpool), 17 February 1831, 2.

must be some doubt as to the immigration ship claims.

Although the registration for the vessel was cancelled in 1836 the *Huskisson* appears in the *Lloyd's List* through to the edition for 1837 but is not listed thereafter. No notice has been found regarding its fate.

*Harry Holman is the former Archivist of Prince Edward Island. A graduate of the University of Alberta and Queen's University with a degree in law, he worked in historic resources administration at both the national and provincial levels. He has contributed to academic and popular journals including recent articles and reviews in The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord and Argonauta. Harry currently maintains a website dedicated primarily to the nautical history of Prince Edward Island and Gulf of St. Lawrence found at [www.sailstrait.wordpress.com](http://www.sailstrait.wordpress.com).*

## *Huskisson* inventory

### **ANCHORS**

- 2 Bowers
- 1 Stream
- 1 Kedge

### **CABLES**

- 2 Chain Cables
- 1 Towline
- 2 Warps
- 1 Buoy rope

### **SAILS**

- 1 Jib
- 1 Foretop mast stay sail
- 1 Fore sail
- 1 Do. topsail
- 1 Do. top gallant do.
- 1 Do. Royal
- 1 Do. Spencer
- 1 Mizzen
- 1 Square main sail
- 1 Gaff top sail

- 2 Lower steering sails

- 2 Top mast do.
- 2 Top gallant do.
- 1 Water hose

### **CARPENTER'S STORES.**

- 1 Pump hook
- 2 Pump brakes
- 4 Lower boxes
- 4 Spear boxes
- 6 Pump bolts
- 1 Sounding rod
- 2 Lower steering sail booms
- 4 Top mast do.
- 4 Top gallant do.
- 1 Spare top sail yard
- 6 Steering sail yards
- 2 Pieces pump leather
- A quantity nails
- 1 Cross cut saw
- 1 Rope ladder
- 2 Hold ladders



Dead lights complete  
 1 Pitch pot  
 1 Grindstone and trough  
 Hatch bars complete  
 4 Tarpaulins  
 12 Handspikes  
 8 Captstan bars  
 2 Boat's chocks  
 Boat's lashings complete  
 ½ Cwt. Pitch  
 ½ Cwt. Oakum  
 6 Chain hooks  
 2 Shank painters

**BOSTSWAIN's STORES.**

A quantity marline  
 Do. Houseline  
 Do. Twine  
 Do. spunline  
 Do. rope yarn  
 Do. Worming  
 1 Cat fall  
 1 Cat block  
 1 Top do.  
 1 Signal halyard  
 2 Fish hooks, runners and tackle  
 5 Double blocks  
 5 Single do.  
 2 Bumpkin do.  
 5 Double luff tackle blocks  
 5 Single do.  
 1 Iron bound snatch do.  
 1 Spun yarn winch & bolt  
 4 Mats for rigging  
 2 Serving mallets  
 4 Scrapers  
 5 Marline spikes  
 6 Hooks & thimbles  
 1 Tar brush  
 1 Tar bucket  
 2/3 Barrel tar

1 Cask black varnish  
 10 Gallons bright varnish  
 1 Pair man ropes  
 3 Ballast shovels  
 1 Deck stopper  
 1 Bithead do.  
 2 Cathead do.  
 10 Hammocks  
 Boom irons complete

**SHIP CHANDLER's STORES.**

1 Brass compass  
 2 Wood compasses  
 1 Deep sea line  
 1 Hand line  
 1 Do. Line  
 1 Log  
 1 Log reel  
 1 Do. Line  
 4 Log glasses  
 2 ½ -hour glasses  
 1 Speaking trumpet  
 1 Signal lanthorn  
 1 Ensign  
 1 Jack  
 1 Forecastle lamp  
 2 Scrubbing brushes  
 2 Deck scrubbing brushes  
 4 Brooms  
 2 Mops  
 6 Paint brushes  
 5 Paint pots  
 4 Oil jars

**COOPER's STORES.**

4 Buckets  
 1 Keg

**COOK & CABIN STORES**

1 Hearth  
 1 Caboose house

1 Poker  
1 Shovel  
1 Frying pan  
1 Pair tormentors<sup>1</sup>  
1 Ladle  
1 Cook's axe  
3 Saucepans  
2 Tea kettles  
1 Baking pan  
1 Cabin Table  
1 Tray  
6 Chairs  
1 Lanthorn  
1 Gallon lamp oil  
3 Tons coals  
6 lb. candles  
1 Hearth brush  
1 Dust pan

**PROVISIONS**

1 Barrel Pork

**BOATS**

1 Long Boat  
1 Skiff  
1 Rudder  
1 Tiller  
6 Oars  
2 Davits

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<sup>23</sup> A long-handled fork used for taking the meat from the coppers.