Stay tensioners, rear nameboards

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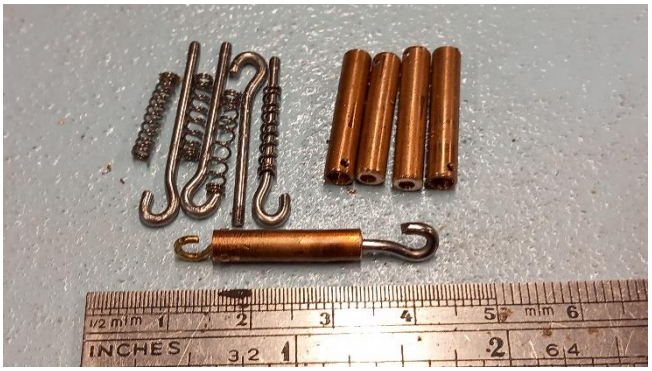
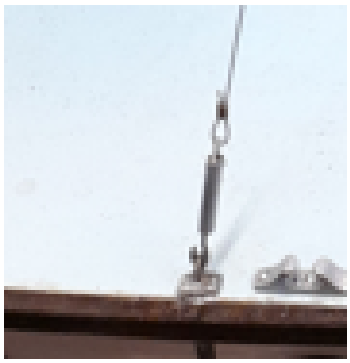
Sundowner – 22

Still waiting for the bits and pieces for the handrails, so on with a few more little jobs. Since I had made the stay attachments for the forward mast (the easy one), I thought I would experiment to try to make the stays themselves spring loaded to keep them reasonably tight and allow them to be unhooked easily. In real life, stays like this are usually tightened using left- and right-hand thread tensioners, but they will not allow easy removal (even if I had left hand thread tackle this small – around 10BA). However, thought I, with a little licence, the bulk of a tensioner like this could be replaced with a small spring-loaded device. So, I made one with a stainless-steel spring that I wound from springy wire (1/16" inside diameter) inside a turned brass cylinder 4mm outside diameter and a 1/16" hole in one end. It seemed to work and is not too large, giving around 8 mm of spring movement, so I made four more for all of the stays on the front mast. They are all made by eye (but using the same drills etc) and are slightly different lengths and 'springing capacity', but I can now breathe again having drilled and tapped tiny (for me) 10BA threaded holes. We will see whether they work well enough and are unobtrusive when I rig the mast. The photo shows the prototype and the bits for the rest, but not including the 10BA 'nut' I made to hold the spring to the hook after assembly (and it needed to slide up the tube, so I made it to fit and tapped it and assembled it while attached to the parent rod of brass and cut it off afterwards…too hard to photo! The hook at the other end is attached to the tube by a bent up '9' hook shape with a bit of 1mm brass through the eye and tube and rivetted over, made as I assembled them.



Just a comment about bending wire (up to 1/16" diameter in this case): whenever I had to do it until a few years ago, I used to do things like wind the wire round a suitable shaft in the vice (which is how to make springs anyway, or use the lathe unpowered or hand drill to speed things up). This was until I watched an itinerant 'wire ornament maker' on the high street. He had a selection of round jaw pliers that made the job really easy, so I acquired a couple (actually from a car boot sale). Everyone reading this might say 'really, you went through life without realising this?' but here is a picture of my pliers for interest!

I rigged the fore mast with the four stays at least to see what it all looked like… I think it is acceptable and the rigging wires are nice and straight, although whether use, age and knocks will allow them to 'stay' that way is a moot point. I need to add a fifth wire to the bow for this mast and then rigging the aft mast…



and that is not obvious for reasons mentioned earlier (ie attachment points on removeable model hatches). The stay wires are looped through a short (c2mm) piece of 1.5mm bore thin wall brass tube (I had 2 inches of it in the scrap bin!) at each end, adjusted to length and then superglued and the tube squeezed with pliers to fix them.

Thinking more about the aft mast, the earlier photos showed more rigging on both masts and between them, probably when the boat was expected to fly sails, and the aft mast is NOT secured to the wheelhouse or hatch, but to the gunwale as for the forward mast. If I did this, it would be much easier to make and then use, but not strictly replicating the same, later, era style. Methinks I might be agonising too much, just get on with it – after all, it needs to be practical. The photo shows the rigging of the aft mast (just) in this style… the fore mast on this iteration has three stays to each gunwale, but that might just be overkill, as is the wire you can see between masts. It all helps it look good, but it makes the practical use and access a pain, so compromise is the order of the day! That means four more fiddly little tensioners and their deck fittings…although I made them to be easily demountable, I don't suppose they ever will actually be 'demounted', especially since I will be able to get all the hatches off without disconnecting any rigging.

I have now made the extra four tensioners and placed deck hooks in the appropriate place for this older style. I haven't bothered with a photo as they are the same as the previous ones.

Whilst waiting for glue to dry, I cheated. They say that name plates should be applied at the very end (and the name plates at the bow, I will wait for), but the stern has a name plate and port name, so, since I was playing around with transfers, I made these. The difference between these and the lifebelt ones (they are around the same size) is that these are white text on a black background. Bearing in mind the point from earlier about having to use white decal paper for light-on-dark transfers, I used this but printed on it a text box (using 'word') that was filled with black and with white lettering. This printed fine, although the black could have been 'darker' (the lacquer to seal it all helped though). The letters are mounted, on the real thing, on separate boards, so that meant I could make two name boards off the boat that were black painted first. I was able this time to use the as-printed names without separating the letters, and I cut round the names and applied the transfers. There was a white witness round the cut out where you could see the decal edge (which is white here). Another coat of black paint around the edge hid this followed by varnish. The result all seems OK and I stuck the boards to the transom with epoxy. It is not a very forgiving photo, but that is like it is… except that everything is central, it's the camera that wasn't!