



SAILMASTER BV

by Richard Tofsen and Team



MERCATOR

FLAG BELGIUM

General characteristics

Built :	1932 by Ramage&Ferguson Ltd.
Owner	City of Oostende
Tonnage:	778 BRT
Length:	Sparred Length: 78,40 m
Beam:	10,60 m
Height:	Max. Height: 41,00 m
Draft:	4,50 m
Sail plan:	15 sails Sail area: 1600 m2
Speed:	13 knots

Overhaul of rigging

Winter 2008– 2009



- **Client** DAB Vloot Belgium Maritime directorat
- **Main Contractor for rigging** Mennens Amsterdam BV
Finance, material purchase, logistics, personel
- **Subcontractor for rigging** Richard Tefsen Sailmaster
Project Management, on site implementation, personel
- **Duration of project** Oktober 20th 2008 – May 4th 2009
- **Location** Industrie de Pecherie IdP Shipyard Oostende Belgium



Making new wire seizings



Project description:

- Dismanteling and removing from the ship of four yards, 2booms , 2 gaffs including sails and all running rigging
- Disassembly and removal from the ship of Fore lowermast, fore topmast and foretopgallant mast and mainlowermast, maintopmast and Mizzen lowermast and mizzen topmast and bowsprit
- Production of new standing rigging
- Installation and assembly of masts and spars with new standing rigging
- Installation of yards and spars with sails and running rigging.

October 2015

We down rigged the entire barquentine in Oostende at IDP Shipyard, except for her head rig. This job was primarily to allow the ship to fit into a ship building hall for extensive hull repairs, for this the bowsprit was not a height issue.





October 2023

In 2021 we carried out a detailed periodical inspection of the rigging of Mercator. Based on the recommendations of the 2021 report, we returned in May 2023 to disassemble and remove the wooden fore topgallant mast, all yards, booms, gaffs and the cross trees.

For safety, durability and reduction of maintenance work, it was decided that all wooden yards, spars and other wood work in the rigging should be replaced in steel. In collaboration with Marigraph GmbH in Bremen which provided drawings and consultation, and ship yard Koopmans scheepsbouw in Harlingen, new steel cross trees, the fore top gallant mast, upper topsail yard, topgallant yard, main and mizzen booms and the main and mizzen gaffs were produced in steel and installed.

In Belgium, the standing and running rigging was inspected and underwent maintenance or was renewed. Subsequently Mercator was fully rigged up again with her new steel yards and spars in October 2023.





Mercator

The barquentine ***Mercator*** lies at anchor in Oostende, Belgium. She was named after Gerardus Mercator (1512-1594), Flemish cartographer. She was designed by the Antarctic explorer Adrien de Gerlache (1866-1934) as a training ship for the Belgian merchant fleet. She was built in Leith, Scotland[2] and launched in 1932.

Besides being a training ship, she was also used, mainly before World War II, for scientific observations, or as ambassador for Belgium on world fairs and in sailing events. She participated in several races, winning the 1960 Oslo-Oostende tall ships race. She brought back two Moai (giant statues) from Easter Island. In 1936 she brought home from Molokai, Hawaii, the remains of Father Damien. During World War II she was commissioned into the Royal Navy as **HMS Mercator**. Based in Freetown, Sierra Leone, she was the support ship for submarine forces in the area.

Her last trip was to Lisbon for the commemoration of the quincentenary of the death of *infante* Henry the Navigator.

In 1961 she became a floating museum, first in Antwerp, and finally from 1964 in the marina of Oostende, just in front of the city hall.

During all this time, she has become perhaps the best-known ship of Belgium.