The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1. A retrieval system for retrieving a vessel from water to a deck of a recovery vessel, comprising:

a lifting device mounted on the deck of the recovery vessel, the lifting device comprising a substantially vertically extending structure and a lifting hook mounted to said substantially vertically extending structure so as to be raised and lowered therefrom by way of a first winch;

a capture member carried by the lifting hook, the capture member having:

a second winch for lowering a connection lead therefrom, the connection lead having a light weight free end to detachably connect to a connection link of the vessel to be retrieved from the water, the second winch also being configured to raise the connection lead and the connection link of the vessel to be retrieved from the water to the capture member;

a capture mechanism configured to capture the connection link of the vessel when the free end of the connection lead is raised by the second winch; and

a control member configured to direct the connection link to the capture mechanism to be captured thereby as the free end of the connection lead is raised by the second winch;

wherein upon capture of the connection link by the capture mechanism the first winch is operated to facilitate lifting of the vessel from the water to the deck of the recovery vessel.

2. A retrieval system according to claim 1, wherein the substantially vertically extending structure of the lifting device comprises a frame structure.

3. A retrieval system according to claim 2, wherein the frame structure is an A-frame structure and the lifting hook is mounted to a central portion of the A-frame structure.

4. A retrieval system according to claim 1, wherein the capture member is configured to be suspended from the lifting hook.

5. A retrieval system according to claim 4, wherein the capture member is substantially U-shaped to define a space into which the connection link is captured by the capture mechanism.

6. A retrieval system according to claim 5, wherein the control member comprises a pulley mounted above the space over which the connection lead passes.

7. A retrieval system according to claim 6, wherein actuation of the second winch causes the connection lead to travel over the pulley such that the connection link is raised into the space for capture by the capture mechanism.

8. A retrieval system according to claim 5, wherein the capture mechanism comprises a locking pin mounted to one side of the capture member and is movable to extend across the space to engage with an opposing side of the capture member to capture the connection link.

9. A retrieval system according to claim 8, wherein the locking pin is movably connected to an actuator to facilitate movement of the locking pin between a first position wherein the locking pin extends across the space to close the space, and a second position wherein the locking pin is located remote from the space to open the space.

10. A retrieval system according to claim 9, wherein the actuator is remotely controlled.

11. A retrieval system according to claim 1, wherein the connection lead comprises a cable that is configured to pass over the control member.