

Basic Detail Report



Nerana

Vessel number

HV000086

Date

1932

Primary Maker

Charlie Peel

Description

NERANA's exact design and construction origins remain unclear. Information from contemporary sources and recollections of people associated with the boat is incomplete and details are sometimes in conflict. From reports about South Australian yachting in the early 1930s, taken from the Australian Motor Boat and Yachting Monthly magazine, it appears that NERANA was the second of two 21s that shipwright and boat builder Harry Clausen is reported to have built in that period. The first was TRITON, from a design by Blunt of Victoria, and eventually skippered by W.R. McKinley. Records show that TRITON was sailing in late 1931, then a year later NERANA appears on the list of boats in the RSAYS invitation race for the 21 Foot Restricted class, with Harry Clausen's name attached as either owner or skipper. The construction of the boat is another clue to its origins. Many have claimed NERANA was built by Charlie Peel, but the layout of the floors and the manner in which the frames forward of the mast drift forward from the keel to the sheer rather than remain perpendicular to the centreline are features not found on other Peel built hulls. The combination of the reports and unusual construction indicate it was not a Peel built hull and is a Clausen boat. However other information shows that it is a Peel design. The only remaining document is a sailplan of NERANA with the signature Chas Peel on one side. The shape of the boat also seems to have Peels "signature" attached because it features the slight tumblehome from just forward of amidships extending back to the transom, which was a Peel hallmark. The general shape, stem profile and transom are all very similar to EIGHTEEN TWENTY, another Peel design from the early 1930s that is still extant. From this collection of facts it can be accepted that NERANA is a Peel design, which was always understood to have been the case. Planked in Australian red cedar on hardwood frames, with about 700 kgs of internal ballast, NERANA was a big and powerful hull shape built closely to the minimum scantlings allowed by the detailed class rules. It was clearly meant to be raced at the highest level in the class. NERANA was completed in time to become one of the three boats representing South Australia in the 1933 Forster Cup series, held off Adelaide early in that year. Skippered by Len Wigan, NERANA performed extremely well, but in a sporting gesture, Wigan forfeited a second placing by declaring he had touched a rounding buoy, unobserved by others. This act gave the series to MILSONIA, another surviving 21. It is also understood that the actual owner of NERANA was now Professor Mark Mitchell. He was a sailing enthusiast and benefactor. Under his ownership the yacht was skippered by younger sailors to give them an opportunity that was otherwise unavailable to them. Len Wigan was one and Ken McLaren another who benefited. NERANA raced in at

least one more interstate series before the war, but came into its own in the post-war years. Harry Perry recognized the potential and bought the boat. He had the hull re-fastened and purchased a new set of sails from Rex in Hobart, one of the premier racing sail makers in the country. He also understood the need to have big crew members to sail on the boat, and not just for their strength, but also for their weight on the side in heavy weather as this was a crucial factor for performance. Well prepared and enthusiastically sailed, NERANA raced in depleted fleets from 1953 to 1955, dominating all three series with wins in the Albert cup invitation race followed by series victories to secure the Forster Cup. Surviving crew member Ralph Crook was a young lad at the time, and he worked forward manning the halyards. Ralph still remembers the pride and teamwork the crew showed, and the great thrill it was to secure these wins for their state. After 1955 the series was discontinued in the class. The 21s soon disbanded as a fleet, and began to be dispersed to other areas. NERANA was one of about five 21s bought by Melbourne yachting enthusiast Otto Meik to set up a training class on Port Phillip Bay with the Royal St. Kilda Yacht Club. The boats were re-rigged with Dragon class Bermudan rigs, replacing the now rather old gunter rig used by the 21s. When no longer used as training boats, the 21s moved on again, and NERANA eventually found a home as a recreational boat on the Victorian Gippsland Lakes, where running repairs kept it going for a long period. In 2004 NERANA came to Sydney for a possible restoration project, which did not eventuate. However with its existence rediscovered and importance recognized enthusiasts from Goolwa in South Australia arranged to take NERANA back to its home state and join a small but dedicated fleet of surviving 21s that had sailed there since the 1980s. A much simpler rebuilding project over 2005 and 2006 saw NERANA's hull cleared of various additions made since the Melbourne days, the original planking was reinforced with a fibreglass laminate over the exterior, and bulkheads were installed along with a new deck and new rig. Recently re launched in 2006, NERANA sails once more against old adversaries including MILSONIA.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 7.62 m x 6.4 m x 2.44 m (25 ft x 21 ft x 8 ft)