

Basic Detail Report



Boomerang

Vessel number

HV000001

Date

1903

Primary Maker

Walter Reeks

Description

BOOMERANG is a wooden auxiliary schooner that was built at W Holmes Boat Builder's yard in Lavender Bay NSW in 1903 . It was launched as BONA and first owned by Charles Wallace. The schooner has had only a small number of owners, but is usually associated with the Albert family, who bought the vessel in the late 1920s and renamed it BOOMERANG. From the mid-1930s it only operated under motor, entertaining the family and VIP guests around the harbour and up to Broken Bay, north of Sydney. Just over 60 years later in 1988 the Albert family donated BOOMERANG to the Sydney Heritage Fleet, who operate the craft on regular trips on Sydney Harbour. BOOMERANG has long been admired as both a classic example of Edwardian yacht design and styling, and as one of Walter Reeks' most beautifully designed craft. Launched as BONA in 1903, the schooner was named after Ruby Bona Steele, the wife of the owner Charles Wallace. It immediately attracted attention on Sydney Harbour, before leaving to go south to Port Phillip. The 'Rudder' (USA) in March 1907 published details about the vessel, right down to the furnishings, which were 'selected with the utmost taste by Mrs. Wallace'. Further compliments were paid to other items, including the structural timber; 'Australian hardwood, of which there is no better for shipbuilding purposes'. Built as a cruising boat, BONA went south to Tasmania in 1905 on one well documented voyage. Two albums of images show the detail of BONA, interesting aspects of the voyage and anchorages they visited. Wallace sold BONA to fellow Melbournian H Howard Smith in 1918. He narrowly missed losing the tender for purchase to AH Davies from Sydney. Davies decided not to pursue the purchase, but he later commissioned a new schooner design by Reeks, No 303, which was never built. The surviving plans show what would have been a fine vessel to complement BONA. Howard Smith refurbished BONA and cruised the boat until he sold it in 1927 to Charles Lloyd-Jones, from Sydney. Lloyd-Jones had admired it from the day it was launched. 'I watched her being built by Holmes of Lavender Bay, and always loved her. I did not see her for many a long day after that, until, one day I saw her moored on the Yarra. There she was, just as beautiful and delicate as ever; the passing years had made no ravages on her, and she was as lovely as the day she was launched' ('Sydney Sails' 1962). Lloyd-Jones only had BOOMERANG for about 2 years before selling it to Frank Albert in 1929, the well known Sydney Harbour yachting identity and music publisher. BONA was renamed BOOMERANG by the Alberts, and it sailed for the last time early in their ownership. From the mid 1930s onwards the Alberts used it under power only. Part of the problem was that the centreboard had been removed (as part of Howard-Smith's

refurbishment), so it had poor performance to windward, but the major issue was the gradual but now noticeable distortion in the sheer at the mainmast shroud plates. It gave the hull a hogged appearance and many stories abounded as to how BOOMERANG had 'broken her back'. None of the stories were true, it was just a gradual distortion, suggesting that the scantlings or construction in that area were not sufficient for the shroud load. The Albert family cruised and entertained guests on Sydney Harbour and Pittwater, but eventually the yacht was retired from use and remained moored, first in Careel Bay and then later back in Sydney. Whilst BOOMERANG was in Careel Bay during the mid 1960s, it was proposed as a suitable vessel to take the Queen on a cruise to Bobbin Head during her visit to Sydney. Robert Lyall, an apprentice at Palm Beach Marine Services adjacent to BOOMERANG's moorings recalls being given the task of removing the old Kermath engine and replacing it with a Gardner (which it still has). After this was done, a team headed by the Albert's shipwright Ron Balkwell descended on BOOMERANG and gave it a major overhaul. Part of the team was a professional interior decorator who repainted the internal fitout with impressive attention to detail. At the last moment there was change to the arrangements, and a young Princess Anne and her ladies in waiting made the trip in place of the Queen. Robert also recalls running a small petrol generator each day to charge the batteries, but it required a healthy dose of Redex additive to get it started. This produced clouds of smoke around the vessel, and on one occasion bystanders raised the fire alarm thinking BOOMERANG was in danger. BOOMERANG remained in good condition, and was donated by the Alberts to the Sydney Heritage Fleet in 1987. The SHF soon had the vessel operating again regularly, still under power only, but the sight of the gracious BOOMERANG was once again a source of admiration on Sydney Harbour.

Dimensions

Registered Dimensions: 22.23 m x 5.11 m x 2.31 m, 28.85 tons x 42.43 tons (72.94 ft x 16.77 ft x 7.58 ft)
Vessel Dimensions: 25.29 m x 19.81 m x 5.11 m x 2.36 m, 343.71 m² (82.98 ft x 65 ft x 16.77 ft x 7.74 ft, 3700 ft²) Engine dimensions: 104.4 kilowatts, 6 No (140 horsepower)