

Basic Detail Report



Freya

Vessel number

HV000624

Date

1963

Primary Maker

Lars Halvorsen Sons Pty Ltd

Description

FREYA's lines were an evolution of Trygve's previous designs including SOLVEIG, ANITRA and NORLA. The yachts were all designed and built as fast cruising yachts, but they were just as successful as racing yachts on the east coast of Australia. FREYA's construction began in 1962 while the Trygve and Magnus were involved with the GRETEL (HV000471) America's Cup challenge. The backbone was made from the lofted lines and put aside

until they returned from Newport in October 1962. At this stage Magnus asked Trygve to make a significant change to the design. The earlier yachts designed by Trygve had been built with a spade rudder separate from the keel, but Magnus wanted a hull that was very easy to steer and asked for a keel hung rudder and a long keel. The original lines drawn in early 1962 by Trygve show how the keel ended well short of the spade rudder and this was located right aft close to the end of the waterline. The redrawn lines show the vertical rudder stock moved forward one whole station (about 3 feet) and a much longer keel. This helped the boat track very easily but gave the boat more wetted surface which made it slower in light airs. The original lines also show a name change- the original name for the yacht had been HELGA, Solveig's sister in the Ibsen story, but was changed to FREYA early in the construction. Magnus recalled that "the long keel and deadwood gave her the underwater body of a contemporary 50-55 footer [15-17 metre boat]. She had that feeling of a much bigger boat at sea. With her large vertical rudder there was perfect control. She responded to the helm at all times. Never did she broach to! She carried a shy spinnaker longer than any competing yacht. Indeed, a spinnaker could be carried until it was aback, without rounding up. Freya could also carry full sail to windward in 30 knots of wind." FREYA's construction was supervised by the late Trevor Gowland at Halvorsen's boatshed and yard at Ryde in Sydney. A major emphasis was placed on strength for rough-water sailing. The yacht was 38 feet 9 inches long (11.8 metres), with a beam of 11 feet (3.35 metres). It was planked in Douglas fir (Oregon) with splined and glued seams. The framing was glued laminations of Queensland maple, the deck was plywood with an exterior layer of fibreglass and the cabin sides were varnished teak. The aluminium mast was stepped on the coach-house and supported by bulkheads. Inside FREYA had bunks seven feet (2.15 metres) long and carpet on the floor, it was a

comfortable to sail and was intended to go cruising as well as racing. There was considerable attention to detail and innovation too. Three custom made winches were manufactured by Malcolm Barlow in Superston, an aluminium bronze alloy, and according to Trygve they barely needed any maintenance in their lifetime the wear was so low. He also noted that Barlow made no subsequent winches in Superston as it was so hard to machine. They used their special cast swivel fitting they had been developing since the late 1940s for the two spinnaker halyards. The cone shaped body locked into the mast head fitting reducing wear and increasing longevity for the wire halyards. The shrouds were connected to 'U' bolts in the deck, and these were then tightened under the deck for rig tension, and made the rig secure from any accidental or other tampering. Perhaps the most innovative feature was the deck stepped mast, where the heel fitting was a ball joint that concentrated the load to a central point and allowed the base to move around at that point in sympathy with any mast bend or rig stretch. As a consequence the mast never developed any sideways 'S' bends, but it's real value was in sail shape control. The aft lowers were left slightly loose which allowed the mast to bend forward under load. Therefore, as wind pressure increased, the mast bent with a curve forward, which automatically flattened the mainsail and it then set with a flatter depth that was suited to the increased wind strength. With internal halyards, an automatic response to wind strength and the other details noted the rig was the actually the simplest rig to handle that the Halvorsen's had ever had. FREYA's debut was eagerly anticipated in yachting circles and Seacraft August 1963 reported the following: "Halvorsen Brothers, Trygve and Magnus, will have a new boat for the Sydney to Hobart race this year. Resembling ANITRA, she will be six inches longer and have 18 inches more beam. Her name is FREYA (Norwegian Goddess of Love and Song) and she is 38' 6" overall with 11' beam. She will carry more sail than ANITRA. This will be made possible by 18 inches more on the foot of the foretriangle, and a longer main boom." The news also reached a young 10 year old Tasmanian girl well inland in Poatina, her name was Freya as well. She wrote to the Halvorsens, noting she was named after the girl in Joseph Conrad's story "Freya of the Seven Isles." "I was so happy to hear that you have called your yacht Freya. That is my name and I am praying that you will win". With seven aboard- joint skippers Magnus and Trygve, navigator Stan Darling and crew Keith Brown, Barry Gowland, Trevor Gowland and Stan McRae - the race started with a run down the New South Wales coast under north east breezes. By the time the competitors were near Storm Bay near the finish the weather turned to storms, with huge seas and high winds, weather FREYA was designed not only to withstand but to relish, and the yacht won on handicap. Seacraft in February 1964 wrote the following: "Competitors agree it was one of the roughest and hardest parts of the course this year and was equal to the worst experienced in other races. FREYA reported at one stage she literally disappeared under the green seas only to bounce back and throw off tons of water to go on to the finish line second behind ASTOR (HV000036) and to win the event on corrected time. A Halvorsen-built boat has many points in its credit, but when such a boat is also helmed and crewed by Halvorsens, the boat becomes odds-on favourite, and FREYA proved no exception, although a new boat launched a few weeks before the event." The following year FREYA's reputation was enhanced when it won the Montague Island race held in rough weather, one of the season's lead-up races to the Hobart and a trial race for selecting a team of three yachts for the 1965 Admiral's Cup series in the UK. FREYA then claimed its second Hobart win late in 1964, leading the field for much of the run down the coast of New South Wales in a race Seacraft described as fast and hard. Their race report by Sheila Patrick included the following: "The day before this Hobart race, I jokingly asked Tryg to relax a little this year, and

give the other yachts a chance.' I have written all I can about you and your crew – there is nothing else to say if you win this one'. Trygve answered quietly, 'We have got to win it to prove that the Admiral's Cup team is the best we can send.' Anyway, how could the Halvorsens and their 'boys' ever relax during an ocean race. Although quietly spoken, even shy, ashore, these two brothers are tremendous drivers at sea. Their crew never stand watches. Everyone works as he is required. Anyone who has sailed aboard a Halvorsen yacht in an ocean race learns exactly what it means to drive a small boat at sea. This is why this 39ft sloop finished only a bare five hours astern of the 73 foot Astor on the 670 mile trip" FREYA also won the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia's ocean-racing point score for the 1964-65 season. FREYA, CAPRICE OF HUON and CAMILLE OF SEAFORTH (HV000079) were selected for Australia's 1965 Admiral's Cup team, which gained second placing to the surprise of the seasoned UK, USA and European crews who had little knowledge of the depth and quality of Australian ocean racing. The Sydney to Hobart race in late 1965 attracted a huge amount of attention. It was the 21st sailing of the race, and a number of top overseas yachts entered, including the South African maxi-yacht STORMVOGEL, considered to be the fastest ocean-racing yacht in the world. FREYA's third Hobart was also eagerly anticipated by the yachting fraternity and the general public. The fleet included two steel sister ships to FREYA, KARINGAL and ODIN built by a new company Trygve Halvorsen had established after leaving Lars Halvorsen Sons the year before. Weather conditions were light for the entire race – and this was not FREYA's preferred weather in terms of sailing speed. It was tactics that won the race for them, showing the all-round capabilities of the Halvorsens' as sailors, designers and builders. The Halvorsen brothers took FREYA further offshore in search of better and more consistent wind. By the time they had tacked back inshore off Kiama, they were leading STORMVOGEL by two nautical miles. STORMVOGEL regained the lead, but FREYA crossed the line third to become the first yacht ever to win the Hobart handicap 'hat trick' of three successive wins – an achievement that still has not been equalled. The Sydney to Hobart race was well-known for its varying weather conditions, and FREYA showed that it was possible for a yacht to win regardless of this variety of conditions which would at different times clearly favour different types of design. Once again Seacraft were full of praise for FREYA and its crew, as Sheila Patrick wrote: HAT TRICK FOR HALVORSENS – World yachting history was made by Trygve and Magnus Halvorsen in their 38 ft canoe-sterned FREYA by winning the Sydney to Hobart race for the third time in succession. The only other time a famous ocean race has been won three times was, I think, when American yachtsman Carleton Mitchell took out the same hat trick with FINNISTERE in the Bermuda race. Although this race, as Trygve himself said, was the easiest of the three, the competition was the strongest ever encountered in a Sydney to Hobart. Apart from STORMVOGEL which is really a freak racing yacht – only one other yacht, BALANDRA, the new, fast 46ft Quiver class, beat the 38 ft FREYA across the line. Trygve who, in his middle forties, has spent his whole life building, designing and sailing ocean racing yachts, says this FREYA is his idea of a perfect racer." Interviewed in early 2014 Trygve happily recalled the racing days with FREYA, and was very quick to point out that he designed a fast, seakindly cruising yacht that was then also a fast racing yacht, and that the crew, in particular his colleagues Stan Darling and Trevor Gowland were just as important in the yacht's ability to win those races. It was a team sport and everyone played their part to enable the yacht to win. The brothers did not race FREYA together again after this win, and Magnus took over Trygve's share in the yacht and then largely cruised FREYA with his family. When it was put up for sale, no one in Australia was prepared to buy it as they felt they would be expected to win if they raced FREYA again. Magnus then

made the decision to sell it in the USA. He sailed it across and eventually it was sold to Roy and Tee Jennings. Its subsequent ownership is still being determined, but it remained largely in the US region, and when it was recently sold to its current European based owner, it was in a marina at Carriacou, Grenadine in the West Indies. The new owner is planning to overhaul FREYA before sailing it across the Atlantic to his home port on Majorca in the Mediterranean Sea. A previous owner, Mr John Corbett from California had also sailed the yacht extensively in the West Indies but was unlucky enough run onto a reef, damaging one side as it grounded and then sank. FREYA was refloated after 10 days underwater, and repaired by an American shipwright. As well as a small number of steel sister ships to FREYA, a couple of larger versions were made including a 60 foot long yacht called BANJO PATTERSON. One of the delivery crew on FREYA for the passage to the USA with Magnus was Jim Gannon, and Magnus gave him a set of the lines with a slight modification to the stern shape. A mould was made by Gannon and a number of fibreglass FREYAs were then built in the USA. After this third win Trygve decided to give up competitive sailing as an owner-skipper. He crewed on five Hobart races between 1968 and 1974, as well as competing in the Onion Patch Series (New York to Bermuda) in 1972 in APOLLO, before he retired to spend more time with his family. Magnus had become passionate about ocean racing again with the third win in 1965, but decided to concentrate on his navigation skills. He raced very successfully in a further 11 Hobart races as well as other ocean races, before finally retiring from competitive racing in 1982 at the age of 64. In 1975, Magnus navigated the American maxi KIALOA II in its line-honours record-breaking Hobart race – a record that stood for 21 years. Written with reference to Signals 105 article on FREYA by Randi Svensen, author of Wooden Boats, Iron Men – the Halvorsen Story (Halstead Press and the Australian National Maritime Museum 2004), and personal recollections from Trygve Halvorsen 2014.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 11.96 m x 10.29 m x 3.43 m x 1.83 m, 11.89 tonnes (39.25 ft x 33.75 ft x 11.25 ft x 6 ft, 11.7 tons)