

Basic Detail Report



Mary Ann Simms

Vessel number

HV000507

Date

1957

Primary Maker

RT Searles and Sons

Description

MARY-ANN SIMMS was designed and built in 1957 for Ben Simms, from the well-known Simms family from Spencer Gulf. The builders RT Searle and Sons were based at Birkenhead on Port Adelaide, and were a widely respected yard that built a diverse range of craft for commercial and recreational uses in the region. The 17 metre long carvel planked hull was built in WA jarrah, a tough and long lasting timber ideal for the purpose, while the decks were celery top pine. It was fitted with a 66 kW (88 hp) Kelvin motor, and in an novel feature for the period a substantial gaff schooner sailing rig was included and used as an economic way of conserving fuel when wind conditions were favourable. It was launched complete with refrigeration and was the first of the Spencer Gulf fleet of fishing boats to have this innovation. Simms designed the boat and was its only skipper while in operation. An article published at least five years after it was launched notes that Ben Simms used 'modern technology' to make prawning 'less hit or miss'. " He has a thermograph fitted in the wheelhouse..... and has found prawns are thickest at temperatures of 18 to 24 degrees." In 1961 it was modified with the addition of a wheelhouse to adapt it for offshore work, and taken into deeper and rougher waters south of the gulf for tuna fishing. As well as fishing, MARY-ANN SIMMS was used for the maritime survey work undertaken prior to cable-laying from the mainland to Kangaroo Island. The Mary-Ann Simms was also used for research and survey work for the Prawn Farm at Port Broughton and the only boat ever to have had Western King Prawns reproduced in captivity over her stern off Simms Cove in the 1970's. The Simms family patriarch Joseph "Curly" Simms had been a trawler man in the North Sea before coming to South Australia, settling in 1864. He could see schools of fish offshore from the cliff tops at what became Simms Cove, named after the family. He established his fishing base there to service the local mining communities, selling his catch door to door. Simms Cove lies between Moonta Bay and Port Hughes on the western side of the Yorke Peninsula. MARY-ANN SIMMS operated from there as well, but was based at Port Broughton through the winter months for numerous years. After it was no longer used for fishing MARY-ANN SIMMS was rarely operated. Supporters of the vessel recognised its connection to the region and began efforts to raise money for the purchase of the vessel to keep it in the area. In 2011 an association was formed at Wallaroo to raise funds to purchase the boat from Ben Simms and keep it in trust for the local community around the waters of Spencer Gulf. They

have plans to take off the wheelhouse, restore the rig and bring the vessel back to its original configuration. It is now based at Wallaroo, just to the north of Simms Cove. The vessel now has a 135 kW (180 hp) 6 cylinder Kelvin marine diesel engine, but retains its original planking and deck structure.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 17.07 m x 16.46 m x 5.33 m x 1.98 m, 50.81 tonnes (56 ft x 54 ft x 17.5 ft x 6.5 ft, 50 tons)