

Basic Detail Report



Sao

Vessel number

HV000011

Date

1905

Primary Maker

WM Ford Boatbuilders

Description

SAO is a wooden carvel built hull, 7.5 metres long and rigged as a gaff cutter. It has a deep keel configuration. Built by WM Ford Boatbuilders in 1905, it was used as a cruising boat on and around Sydney Harbour. The

designer is unknown however Fords were capable builders who did design some of the small craft they built, and it is possible they also designed SAO. Another possible designer was EW Heywood, an accomplished amateur designer who also had a number of craft built by Ford. SAO is noted during its construction in a Sydney Morning Herald report 5 August 1905: " Mr JB Holdsworth is having a little deep-keeled, counter stern yacht for pleasure sailing, The craft will shortly be afloat". It was begun around late May, as a report from 30th May 1905 notes that it is 'in hand'. An intriguing feature is the apparent revision at the sternpost, it appears to have had a new post and rudder trunk added aft of the original one, possibly in relation to an early engine installation. SAO's history has been recorded by the current owners, and it is known that a relative of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, the famous Australian pioneer aviator, was one of the early owners. This was Thomas Kingsford Swallow. The Swallows were close relatives of Charles' mother Catherine Kingsford Smith and the families spent a lot of time together prior to WW1. During this time as a youngster, Charles learnt to sail on SAO. Ian Mackersey in his biography of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith 'Smithy', writes the following " On the small family boat, Sao, he learned how to sail. Camping expeditions would act magnetically to rally retinues of friends and cousins to their favourite destination, in the Hawkesbury River estuary, about 20 miles north of Sydney. They visited Flint and Steel Bay, on the southern rocky forested shore, year after year. It was accessible only by sea and their privacy rarely intruded upon. A photograph taken there, probably in the summer of 1913, shows a happy family group beside a tent in the bush. Winifred, Wilfred, Eric, Leofric and his fiancée, Elfreda, and Charles (Kingsford Smith) are all there. So are cousins Rupert Swallow and Godfrey and Philip Kingsford." Lloyds Register for yachts records that Thomas Kingsford Swallow bought SAO in February 1912 from the first owner J B Holdsworth. It was then sold by Swallow family in 1917 . The current owners located further information in a letter from the third owner, George Solomon: "The owner Mr Kingsford Swallow sold the yacht to Einerson Bros ship breakers of Berry's Bay before going overseas to the war. Einerson Bros removed the lead keel as lead was very scarce and expensive at wartime. I purchased the yacht and had the iron keel made by

Brown and Brown of Pyrmont.” At that time it is understood that Solomon was a young shipwright at Fords yard and they just lifted Sao over the fence from Einersons. It had also been understood from R J Swallow, the brother of Thomas Kingsford, that the family sold SAO because Thomas was thought to be too wounded to sail SAO again. Mr Albert Muller acquired SAO from George Solomon in 1919. He sold the yacht at a date unknown to the Campbell brothers and they kept it on Lake Macquarie until around 1925. SAO returned to Sydney Harbour eventually, and in the early 1960's owner Rob McAuley recalls enjoying sailing SAO, but when he bought it the yacht needed work. They recaulked the topsides and put on a new gaff yard, taken from an 18-foot skiff, while SAO's original gaff yard ended up on a flagpole. SAO was restored to excellent condition by the current owners who bought the vessel in 1964. It has the same rig proportions, in fact they went as far as retrieving the gaff yard from the flagpole. The structure is largely original and only repaired as necessary. SAO has sailed in a number of SASC Gaffers Day events and featured in other classic yacht festivals. It has also made it onscreen. SAO was the yacht sailing on the harbour in a scene in the film ‘Phar-lap’ and is the boat alongside the old wharf that Pip's convict friend escaped into in the ABC adaption of ‘Great Expectations’.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 7.5 m x 1.98 m x 1.52 m, 3.21 tonnes (24.61 ft x 6.5 ft x 4.99 ft, 3.16 tons) Engine dimensions: 72.89 x 67 mm, 3.73Kilowatts, 1No. (2.86 x 2.63 in., 5Horsepower) Registered Dimensions: 2.89Tons