

Basic Detail Report



Avian

Vessel number

HV000385

Date

1938

Primary Maker

J J Savage

Description

Knud Reimers was a Scandinavian designer well respected internationally for his light but sturdy and fast, canoe-stern yachts who designed the Tumlaren class. J J Savage built the carvel planked yacht in Huon pine on Blackwood frames at his Nelson Place yard in Williamstown. It was built for Arthur Pask but when war broke out in September 1939, Pask did not take delivery. It remained at Savages

yard until Eric Walker became the owner, courtesy of a payment arrangement with well known yachtsman and businessman Joel White. The Tumlaren was considered an advanced design for its time, with a high aspect ratio sailplan, light displacement and narrow beam - all features derived from the square metre boat class popular in Scandanavia. The canoe sterned hull with a deep keel was also a common Scandanavian style and the combination of features produced a seaworthy and fast yacht well suited to racing on the often rough open waters of Port Phillip. Possibly a dozen of the class were built in Victoria during the 1930s and 1940s. Around eight or so are thought to remain afloat. A small number were also built and are still sailing in Sydney, NSW. AVIAN was christened and launched on 28 September 1940 in a startling new colour scheme featuring bright red topsides, copper anti-fouling and a white boot top. It was soon known as 'The Bright Red Tum'. AVIAN was moored at the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria in Williamstown, but was also registered to race with Royal St Kilda Yacht Club on the other side of Port Phillip. AVIAN immediately made itself known on the race course by sporting a large balloon spinnaker, a style disapproved of by the St Kilda club trustees. It was fast under this sail, but rolled quite violently downwind. Still, the crew encouraged the motion believing it would increase their speed. It also gained notoriety on rough days when racing was cancelled at St Kilda. Despite the courtesy of being informed of the cancellation by phone, AVIAN would sail across to the club, round the moorings and then head back to Williamstown into the heavy seas and strong winds. St Kilda eventually gave up bothering to ring ahead - they knew AVIAN would sail across anyway. The yacht also made frequent trips to Geelong to race which could take some hours, or the better part of the day if conditions were poor. The crew slept aboard the night before in order to make an early start for the passage. Bert Ferris, a former crew member and RYCV historian, recalls AVIAN sailing over to St Kilda to attend a presentation night during World War II. At the

presentation, boat builder Jack Savage told Ferris he was reluctant to use public transport late at night to return to Williamstown. Savage was invited to sail back on AVIAN and late that evening he was at AVIAN's helm, complete with dinner suit and very much in his element, crossing Port Phillip in the total darkness of the wartime blackout. Eric Walker sold the boat in early 1945 to St Kilda club member Les Walker, who then sold AVIAN in September 1945 to his skipper AA 'Bert' White. White continued to race the yacht regularly, losing the rig on one occasion when a fitting gave way. In another race they were required to keep a race log, but the only paper they had on board was a toilet roll. The 'log' was submitted to race officials but a proper copy was made once ashore. The original was hung in the skipper's office. Crew member Norm Johnston joined the crew in the early 1950s and instigated crew training on Sundays. AVIAN went on to win a State Championship in 1952/53. Johnston recalled organising a new mast, which he had delivered through a window to his first floor office in Collins Street Melbourne, where he proceeded to varnish it. White retained ownership for a long period, chartering AVIAN on two occasions to other skippers. One was WK Gash who had an excellent race record with the yacht during the 1980s and early 1990s. It also suffered damage on three occasions when not being used. As a result of one accident, the EE Hayden Trophy for the Tumblaren Victorian State Championship was created from the remains of AVIAN's stem. White died in 1989, and his widow Peggy sold the craft to Ben Thorburn who raced it occasionally before selling it to new owners outside the St Kilda Club. In 2010 it remained active on Port Phillip, racing in classic yacht events and other club fixtures.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 8.38 m x 6.86 m x 1.92 m x 1.37 m, 1.95 tonnes (27.5 ft x 22.5 ft x 6.3 ft x 4.5 ft, 1.92 tons)