

Basic Detail Report



Amy Christina

Vessel number

HV000371

Date

1946

Primary Maker

Alex Lacco

Description

Alex Lacco built AMY CHRISTINA for Cowes (Phillip Island) fisherman Bill Kennon, who named it after his wife, Amy Christina Burgess. The Lacco family business began with Mitch Lacco early in the 1900s and was one of the major cuta boat building yards in southern Victoria. Located initially at Queenscliff until the mid 1920s, Mitch Lacco moved back to his hometown of Rosebud and opened a new boatbuilding shed in 1928. Mitch Lacco's sons Ken, George, Harold and Alex all worked with their father building boats. AMY CHRISTINA's first owner, Bill Kennon, was a well known fisherman in the Phillip Island area and the cuta boat replaced his larger ketch rigged boat HOLYDENE. Lacco built AMY CHRISTINA with the hull shape typical of later cuta boats. It had fuller sections aft to accommodate the size and weight of an engine, while the more rounded forward sections helped the hull rise over waves in rough water, whereas finer hulls would tend to go through them. AMY CHRISTINA was also made a plank higher to be better suited to crayfishing. By the time it was built cuta boats had proved to be useful for a variety of fishing activities. Another unusual construction feature was the double sternpost arrangement. As well as a stern post in the deadwood keel for the propeller housing, the rudder was hung on an outer sternpost which extended down to the keel, aft of the propeller. This extended section of the outer sternpost was removed in the 1960s. The rig also had different features; it was a gaff cutter sailplan rather than the typical sloop rig. It had three shrouds per side, spreaders, and two forestays, one to the stem the other to the end of the jib boom. Kennon used leather bound iron rings to attach the luff to the mast, and a batten along the foot of the mainsail was laced to the boom. Lazy jacks were fitted to the topping lifts so that the gaff and sail could be lowered and secured clear of the deck while working the cray pots. Bill Kennon was a blacksmith and made all the boats wrought iron fittings, his own grappling anchors and the mooring chain. The only cast bronze fittings were the chainplates, rudder fittings, stern cleats and bobstay tang. The final custom details were added by Joe Walton when AMY CHRISTINA was delivered to Kennon. Working at the Cowes Yacht Club he fitted extra knees, stringers and a false keel for even more strength to cope with the rough seas around Phillip Island. He also fitted a removable platform which covered the forward part of the cockpit. Kennon initially used AMY CHRISTINA for crayfishing around Seal Rocks on the southern side of Phillip Island. It was fitted with a 4.5 kw (6 hp) Kelly and Lewis diesel engine. In 1954 he sold AMY CHRISTINA to Charlie Richardson from Rhyll who used it occasionally to go hook fishing. Richardson then sold it to Ken Wood in 1959. Wood used AMY CHRISTINA for fishing parties, coutering and oyster dredging. It was the last boat in

Westernport to dredge under sail. Initially Wood towed the two oyster dredges while reaching across the wind under sail because the engine was not powerful enough. After a year with the Kelly and Lewis motor Wood fitted a more powerful Petter diesel with help from Mitch Lacco who also changed the rig to a simpler lug arrangement. In 1965 AMY CHRISTINA was converted to net fishing. The engine was moved forward and the centre case and thwart removed, while an old Lacco-built cabin was fitted to provide shelter so crew could sleep aboard. The boat was not well suited to netting being too deep and high wooded at the sheer, and in 1967 Ken Wood sold AMY CHRISTINA to his brother Robin at Cowes. Robin sold it in 1973 to George Gazan a retired fisherman at Rhyll, and when he died, his son John took over AMY CHRISTINA and had it re-registered for fishing. In 2005 he sold it to an owner who recognised it was the last couta boat in the area and wanted to see it remain in its home waters. In 2009 AMY CHRISTINA had been restored to its original hull and cockpit configuration, while retaining the later Mitch Lacco lug-rigged mainsail and sloop sail plan rather than the original cutter rig.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 7.31 m x 7.16 m x 2.8 m x 0.76 m (24 ft x 23.5 ft x 9.2 ft x 2.5 ft)