

Basic Detail Report



Kelpie

Vessel number

HV000542

Date

1893

Primary Maker

George Ellis

Description

KELPIE's origins have been the source of conjecture for many years, and some reports suggest it dates back to 1884. However, the first media reports uncovered so far for KELPIE are in both the Sydney Morning Herald and Sydney Mail, on the 16th of September 1893: "Launch of Kelpie. A substantial little craft was launched on Tuesday just from the building yard of Messrs. E Thompson and Co., Drummoyne, built to the order of Dr Eric Sinclair, from a design furnished by Mr Russell Sinclair.... She will be cutter rigged, and in appearance will somewhat resemble the Jenny Wren. The workmanship reflects credit on all concerned" The dimensions and hull construction of teak planking on hardwood and flooded gum frames are noted along with other structural details. A later mention in 'The Australian Yachtsman and Canoeist' also indicates Russell Sinclair as the designer, and an offshoot of this publication, the book " The Yachtsman's Guide to Sydney Harbour and its Neighbourhood" confirms that Ellis and Thompson took over a shed that had been used by Captain Dudley to build yachts, and this shed was in Drummoyne. Lloyds Yachts register in 1901 shows that the brothers jointly owned KELPIE. It is interesting to see some connections with the people involved with KELPIE's origins and the naval architect Walter Reeks, who was then the premier yacht designer in Sydney, and designer of the 2 & ½ rater JENNY WREN noted in the report. Ellis had built two of Reeks much larger yachts ERA and IDUNA in 1887 and 1888, then THELMA in 1889, and at this time he had a yard in Balmain. He was one of the premier builders of this period. Dudley had built a fourth Reeks design, VOLUNTEER in 1888. Ernest Thompson had been a student or apprentice for Reeks in the late 1880s, and in 1889 is recorded as designing his own 2 & ½ rater SIRONA, followed by a few other small-raters. Russell Sinclair was an engineer, and his firm Wildridge and Sinclair was a substantial and diverse business at that time, including involvement in vessel design. They were associated with some of Reeks ferry designs supplying machinery or other engineering requirements for the fitout of these vessels. After launching, KELPIE is noted in the newspapers only once or twice in connection with racing. It was rated at around 2, suggesting it did not carry a jackyard topsail and jib topsail, reducing the sail area substantially compared to the similar length 2 & ½ raters. Its subsequent history is well covered with just one gap in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Russell Sinclair became the sole owner in 1919, and it was sold by him in 1922 to Elizabeth Violet Wood. Her husband Jack Wood used the yacht extensively and is reputed to have sailed it to Perth and back. In 1923 KELPIE was sold to Alexander Burton Mackenzie from Mosman. In 1929 it was sold to Dr Walter John Wearne, and KELPIE was his first yacht. He installed an Tilly

5 hp petrol engine and only cruised the yacht. In 1933 he sold it to an American from Double Bay whose name is not known. In 1946 KELPIE is recorded as being under the ownership of Capt. Allan Bax from Northbridge in Sydney, and he replaced the kauri deck with an Australian beech deck laid over plywood. Peter Leigh bought KELPIE in 1950 and fitted a Simplex petrol engine. It was moored at Mitchell's boatshed in Church Point, and he sailed it single-handed on many passages for over 20 years. KELPIE sailed with Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club and had sail number 142. A new mast was fitted when the original one was broken in 1968. Leigh also added a trunk cabin and enlarged cockpit. In 1972 it was sold to Brian Hunter in Pittwater, then in 1973 it was sold to William Baker in Mosman, and he brought it back to Sydney Harbour. Tim Lloyd bought KELPIE in 1977 and fitted a 5 hp diesel engine. John Wood then purchased KELPIE and oversaw an extensive reconstruction and restoration of KELPIE in the late 1980s and early 1990s at River Quays in Mortlake, with shipwright Ric Wood using traditional techniques throughout. Much of the original hull structure was retained, but a new deck and new hatches were fitted to recreate the original arrangement. The interior is fitted out with saloon berths, and the rig was simplified to a pole mast, gaff topsail cutter with a shorter boom. Under this rig it is easier to handle and has raced successfully in heritage yacht regattas for many years since it was put back in the water in the early 1988. Lin Pardey visited KELPIE in 2016 and recalled how her husband Larry Pardey assisted with fitting out the interior: "To add a bit more to your history of Kelpie. In May of 1990 when we arrived at River Quay Kelpie's hull and rig had been restored by Ric Wood but the interior was empty except for the engine which took up all the area under the companionway so it was very difficult to get down into the boat. The cockpit combings had been finished but the sides and sole had not been completed. John Wood wanted to remove the engine completely. Larry convinced him to instead replace it with a far smaller diesel (8hp I think - whole engine weighed only about 70 Kg compared to the old one which was close to 160 kg.) We then tried to recreate the interior that old timers remember seeing in her including the Pullman sink. And Larry hid all the engine controls behind the tongue and groove cockpit sides. The interior I saw on Kelpie at the festival is unchanged from 1990 other than the material on the cushions" KELPIE remains in excellent condition and has new owners in 2013, who sail the yacht extensively and continue KELPIE's participation in heritage boating events on Sydney Harbour.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 9.14 m x 6.4 m x 1.95 m x 1.52 m (30 ft x 21 ft x 6.4 ft x 5 ft)