

Basic Detail Report



Matilda

Vessel number

HV000744

Date

1867

Primary Maker

R Bennett

Description

MATILDA was built by Bennet at Horses Cove which is now known as Victoria Dock in the city port of Hobart. It was launched as a ketch rigged fishing craft with an amidships wet well and centreboard; an engine was fitted at an unknown date in the early 1900's. MATILDA's length is 11.2 m with both plumb stem and stern, beam of 2.9 m, draft of .8m and displacement of 17.4 tonnes. Construction is seam batten carvel with a lapped sheer strake; the deck is planked with wide seam battened boards. Planking and decking is Huon Pine, frames are blackwood, the keel stern and sternposts are of hard wood and the spars are of Oregon. There has been relatively little alteration to the structure and fittings of the vessel's long working life as a fishing boat, lighthouse tender and sailing yacht, apart from the addition of a cabin. MATILDA's design and construction was very much that of early Southern Tasmanian fishing boats and is very likely a derivative of early whaling boats, particularly those carried by American sealing and whaling ships. Another example of this design is yacht TERRA LINNA (HV000088) circa 1880, which displays the same method of construction. The Wooden Boat Magazine # 230 published a story on TERRA LINNA following a story on "Restoring the Charles Morgan Whale Boats" Wooden Boat Magazine # 226. There were many recognizable similarities between the yacht TERRA LINNA and the whale boats of the mother ship Charles Morgan . MATILDA was a regular visitor to Mason's Cove, Port Arthur in the early years of the Moody families use. From this cove it serviced the mail run to Tasman Lighthouse for over a 40 year period. Firstly, by Richard Moody and the when Richard passed away in 1936 Richard's son William took over the mail run for a further 6 years. As well as delivering mail MATILDA also carried provisions, building materials and passengers including lighthouse keeper's wives returning to Hobart to give birth. William remembers the difficulty in delivering mail, provisions, building materials and passengers to and from the Tasman Island Lighthouse keeper. "Usually we went around the north side the most sheltered area of this Southern Tasmanian Light House, "many times we simply could not land, because of the weather, in which case we just had to keep the mail". Because of such a situation when we finally could land, the lighthouse keeper received up to four [mail] deliveries at once. MATILDA provided a vital service to the main light that guided ships and other vessels into the port of Hobart. MATILDA provided this service with sail only, quite an achievement for boat and crew given the exposure of Tasman Light's location. Following its service for the Moody family and Tasman Light House MATILDA became a prominent feature of the Hobart Waterfront. During the 1950's, despite its antiquity, MATILDA had a convincing win in the last of Hobart's great fishing

boat races. Soon after, Allister Martin, Tasmanian school teacher and founder of “Mission Afloat”, a Hobart based organization to support youth engagement in safe boating activities was the proud owner of MATILDA for several years using it for local and Channel cruising. Sadly, MATILDA was allowed to deteriorate after 1982 when it was acquired by the now defunct Port Arthur Marine Park. However, the Marine Park then saw fit to donate MATILDA to the Hobart City Council for restoration by a Mr Graham McGuiness, foreman for Creese’s Boat Yard at Battery Point, with work focusing on the topsides and making the hull watertight. Most of the restoration work was sponsored by Hazel Bros, a large Earthmoving Company in Hobart and Hobart chandlers, Peter Johnston. The engine, a Lister FR2 motor, was restored by Les Reeves of the Hobart Technical College automotive school. MATILDA was later restored under the watchful eye of Bill Foster for the Hobart City Council. The Council have now placed MATILDA on a display Pontoon in Hobart’s Constitution Dock, as a display of this historic vessel, a true testament to the rich Tasmanian and Hobart maritime heritage given her role in maintaining the Tasman Light House and lighthouse keepers, the guiding light to the Port of Hobart for over 40years. MATILDA no longer sails but is on full public display on the Hobart waterfront as part of Hobart’s rich Maritime Heritage.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 10.97 m × 10.97 m × 2.9 m × 0.8 m, 17.68 tonnes (36 ft × 36 ft × 9.51 ft × 2.62 ft, 17.4 tons)