

Basic Detail Report



Songton

Vessel number

HV000476

Date

1956

Primary Maker

Alf Hansen

Description

SONGTON's builders, Alf Hansen and foreman Harold Collis were well known in Cairns for building various types of working craft with a more than robust construction. Hansen had originally been a bridge builder, and is reputed to have thought that if a section of timber for a boat could be lifted by one man, then it was too small for the task. The pair built a series of sisterships all ending in the -TON suffix for JB 'Jon' Witts on Thursday Island, and consequently they were colloquially known as the Ton class. Three others BRITON (now MARGHERITA HV000117), TRITON and WINSTON are also extant. The 15.85 metre long hull is planked in black penda (xnthostemon chrysanthus) and spotted gum, and copper fastened with steam bent frames. It is planked down to the heel, whereas many other TI luggers showed a modest deadwood for the keel. It also featured a transom stern, designed to avoid the rot problems associated with the traditional long and finer counter sterns where ventilation and access were both difficult. A new plywood and fibreglass deck has replaced the original planked deck. The engine is a Gardner 5LW giving 73 kW power. This is supplemented by the ketch rig that was used in the days when they had a diver down on the pearling grounds and the craft drifted with the wind. SONGTON was first licensed in 1957 to J.B. Witts, registration number A109. The number changed in 1958 when the numbering system was revised (due to the introduction of a new Act governing fisheries in Queensland) and it was licensed as a pearling and trochus boat (reg. A81) to J. B. Witts & Co. in 1958-59 in Thursday Island and from 1960 to 1962 in Cairns (where it would have had a C-prefix number, but the records are missing to confirm this information). In 1963 SONGTON was listed as "not working", Witts having gone bankrupt. From 1964 to 1967 it was licensed to the Department of Native Affairs (on behalf of the Nona family of Badu Island) as A10 PETTA RALPH NONA. Cocky Watkin bought the lugger from the Nona's in the 1980s and sailed it out of Cardwell as a fishing boat until he sold it around 2001 to Peter Catarinich. Watkins added the doghouse, and also converted it to a staysail ketch. In 2011 SONGTON is now a pleasure craft, but still retains much of the the rig and proportions of its time as a working craft in Northern Queensland and Torres Strait. This includes the classic curved sheer and spoon bow profile. Prepared with assistance from the Register of Australian and New Zealand Ships and Boats compiled by Mori Flapan; www.boatregister.net and Tony Hunt.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 15.85 m x 17.98 m x 14.32 m x 4.27 m x 2.01 m, 30.49 tonnes (52 ft x 59 ft x 47 ft x 14 ft x 6.6 ft, 30 tons)