

Basic Detail Report



Leerunna

Vessel number

HV000800

Date

1914

Primary Maker

Alfred Blore

Description

LEERUNNA, originally known as LERUNNA, was built in 1914 by Harold McKay in Woodbridge Tasmania. The name LERUNNA, or LERANNA, is the eastern Tasmanian Indigenous word for flounder, or stingaree. This language word has been identified with the region of Oyster Bay. LEERUNNA was built as a fishing vessel for William Gates, who was first to receive a certificate of competency as a master of a fishing vessel in 1890. It was designed by Alfred Blore as an auxiliary fishing yawl, Blore a well-known Tasmanian designer that worked at the highly regarded Purdon and Featherstone boat building yard in Battery Point Hobart. LEERUNNA is 47 ft in length, batten seamed and made of locally sourced Huon Pine. It was originally gaff rigged, and is now a sloop, further installed with a 51 year old 6 litre Gardener diesel engine. LEERUNNA was the first fishing vessel in Tasmania to have a pot hauler winch, a mechanism designed to minimize the effort required in the lifting of heavy fish nets and traps. Created from a shark line hauler, this mechanism was used primarily for crayfishing. A comprehensive account of LEERUNNA's operational history by Graeme Broxon is detailed below: Lerunna seems to have worked in the scale fish industry in south and eastern waters under her original ownership. Gates was a prominent figure in Tasmanian fishing, and in the late 1920s Lerunna worked on the behalf of the Tasma Fish Company (a cooperative of four owners including Gates), which was in opposition to Hobart's leading fisheries cartel, the Casimaty brothers. In June 1927 fishermen Leslie and Edward Bennett were arrested for stealing fish from Lerunna at the Tasma Co.'s sheds at Battery Point. In 1937 Lerunna was sold to Port Albert interests for £325 to be placed in the Bass Strait shark fishing industry, and a further £150 was spent refitting her, now rigged as a ketch with a Bermudan mizzen. At the time 5 ft sharks were selling in Melbourne, gutted, at £3 per cwt. Lerunna arrived at her new home port on 21 August after an uneventful passage of three days, with a crew of two including her owner. Her new owner was probably Leonard Bolger, formerly of Goolwa SA, who was a fisherman at Port Albert for many years, but had returned to Goolwa by 1947. A relatively small vessel working in dangerous waters, Lerunna (or Leerunna) has been involved in a number of incidents over the years. At around 1 a.m. on 4 August 1915 Lerunna was working off Wedge Island when one of her crew of three, Patrick Markey, fell overboard and drowned. At the time Lerunna was operating under a crew of three including her master E. Sproule. In September 1938 she was involved in a rescue when another Port Albert shark-boat, the 14-ton former Furneaux Group trader Coogee, sprang a leak and foundered in a gale. In January 1947 she made headlines by being involved with the first recorded landing of explorers on

Rodondo Island off Wilson's Promontory. Later the same year she was reported being forced to shelter for about a fortnight from heavy weather in the Kent Group. After about ten years working out of Port Albert, Victoria, Harold Rattenbury nearly lost her on her delivery voyage back to Hobart when she sprang a leak off the Kent Group in Bass Strait. She was beached at St. Helens, but the source of the leak could not be found, so she continued on to Hobart. Here, on being hauled up on Taylor's Slip at Battery Point, the garboard plank fell off between the stern post and the well. Its fastenings had completely decayed and it was only being held there by the external water pressure. Late in June 1952 fears were held for the safety of Leerunna and her crew of three including the owner's son Ray when the vessel failed to return after she was a fortnight out of Dunalley on a crayfishing trip to the Furneaux Group that was expected to take a week. It was later found that she had been sheltering from bad weather at Preservation Island, and on 27 June put into Lady Barron with a large cargo of crays. On 30 July 1987 Leerunna was rolled completely over off Port Davey by a six-metre wave and lost her wheelhouse. A few years after this, Leerunna was sold to Brisbane owners who converted her into a yacht with minimal external alteration. Later in 1993 she was advertised for sale for \$85,000, and sold to new owners who took her to Townsville, but by 2014 was based on the Clarence River NSW, where she has recently undergone further restoration without significant modification.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 14.32 m × 13.72 m × 1.68 m (47 ft × 45 ft × 5.5 ft)