

Basic Detail Report



Benicia

Vessel number

HV000294

Date

1935

Primary Maker

John Alden

Description

BENICIA 12.3 metres (40 feet) in length, was designed by well known American naval architect John Alden, and originally launched with a schooner rig. It is thought to be one of Alden's MALABAR II designs, a number of which have been built around the world. Boatbuilder Alfred W Cuthbertson was well known in Hobart, Tasmania and BENEICIA was built at his Montagu Bay yard in Hobart using Huon pine for the planking. Captain Frank Jelley, BENICIA's original owner was a highly respected yachtsman, company manager and retired master mariner and a well known member of the Shiplovers Society in Hobart. The yacht bears the name of the first ship he sailed on as an apprentice. He raced and cruised the yacht from Hobart. BENICIA made a record passage from Hobart to Sydney in August 1937 which was reported in the September issue of Power Boat and Aquatic Magazine. The report described the rough weather encountered, and an incident when a crew member was nearly washed overboard. The report also notes that crew member Vern Downie was the 'harpoonist'. When a whale was spotted off Gabo Island he '... harpooned it while the BENICIA was being pitched and tossed about by huge seas. However the whale, after lashing and struggling, snapped the rope and soon disappeared.' In 1947 BENICIA was sold to Fred Harris, a crew member on WAYFARER in the first Sydney to Hobart race. Harris employed naval architect Alan Payne to design a new Bermudan rig before taking part in the third Sydney to Hobart race, finishing 13th on handicap. Harris cruised and raced BENICIA until selling it in 1959 to Bill Woodman, who took the yacht to Melbourne, gave it an extensive refit, laid a new deck and extended the cabintop. A syndicate of Victorian owners bought the yacht in 1964, and in early 1966 it was reported to be leaving Port Phillip for a world cruise. Nothing more is known of this venture. The world cruise clearly failed to happen because the next news of BENICIA is a magazine report a few months later in 1966, indicating the then owner, 'Big John' Greenville and the yacht had gone missing, last seen passing the Rip at Port Phillip Heads. However, the son of Peter Langley, who was an owner of BENICIA at the same time as John Sanders and Harry (Harold) McClure has reported that the three owners sailed BENICIA out of Port Philip Bay up the coast in 1966. BENICIA later turned up in Queensland, owned by Jack Richardson. He sold it to the present owner in 1987. The leaky laid deck has been replaced with plywood; a coach house has been added over the galley area and in 2009 BENICIA remained in good condition as a cruising yacht along the Queensland coast.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 12.33 m x 9.45 m x 3.43 m x 1.83 m, 10.24 tonnes (40.45 ft x 31 ft x 11.25 ft x 6 ft, 10.4 tons)