

Basic Detail Report



Shangri-La

Vessel number

HV000474

Date

1938

Primary Maker

Walker and Kelshaw

Description

SHANGRI-LA's first owner was Mr. Harold Arnott, who wanted to build a big fishing and cruising boat. He asked Vernon Bruce Smith, a director of Arnott's Biscuit Company and nephew of Harry Bellingham Howard Smith, owner of the Howard Smith Shipping Line, to commission the construction. The carvel planked 17.3 m long vessel weighed 43 tonnes and was built of American Oregon timber throughout, with double ended, canoe-stern lines and a mid-ships bridge deck that was fashionable in the inter war period. It had two masts 26m and 15.25m long (85ft and 50ft)respectively that could mount 158m² (1700 square feet) of sail and provided an aerial for radio communication. It was powered by two state-of-the-art Swedish Gothenburg diesels totaling 53 kW (70 HP) and capable of cruising the boat at 14 knots. The vessel was launched in October 1938 and christened SHANGRI-LA. The likely site for the builders Walker and Kelshaw in Rushcutters Bay was Capels boatshed, as this was owned by Cyril Kelshaw. In 2011 it is now the site of the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia. In 1940 Mr. V.B. Smith became the new owner and when he enlisted in the armed forces he volunteered the SHANGRI-LA for wartime service. The Commonwealth assumed ownership and it was placed with the Volunteer Coastal Patrol, immediately becoming a principal vessel for the VCP in Sydney Harbour and offshore. On 1 July 1942 SHANGRI-LA was requisitioned by the Commonwealth Government from the Volunteer Coastal Patrol of New South Wales and sold to the United States Army Small Ships Section. Under . It was put under the command of a New Zealand captain Ralph Andrews, and was also manned by American sailors of Filipino origin. It was initially stationed at Bulimba Bay, Brisbane, but later moved up to Port Moresby and Finschhafen, New Guinea. There are reports that it was requisitioned by the Commander in Chief of the Combined US Forces South West Pacific, General Douglas Macarthur, and it appears this was the case when SHANGRI-LA was in Brisbane. Research by Gary Plumley indicates it was moored off the Bulimba shore line near where Macarthur had a residence and he used SHANGRI-LA as his personal craft for river transport. The Americans re-equipped the SHANGRI-LA with new Buda diesels for its service, and whilst there is uncertainty about some of its movements after leaving Brisbane and intended fate at the end of the war, details of its initial actions have been uncovered. Shortly after arrival in Port Moresby it undertook reconnaissance at the mouth of the Fly River, west of Port Moresby. In August it was part of a small fleet that helped land soldiers, ammunition and stores at Milne Bay, where the allied forces defeated a Japanese invasion of around 2,400 soldiers. It was the first defeat on land for the Japanese during the war, however

they continued to bomb Port Moresby. From here the story for SHANGRI-LA is unclear. General Macarthur flew by Flying Fortress between his Brisbane Base HQ and the many field HQ's in various parts of New Guinea until September 1944 when he joined his vast Philippines invasion force at sea and landed with it at Leyte, October 1944. One report suggests SHANGRI-LA ended up in the Philippines as well soon after, bringing the General's personal staff onboard, but this possibly contradicts another report from 1944 indicating it had been deliberately scuttled in the shallows of Finschhafen Harbour, after an attempt to sink it with shore based batteries failed. After the war ended in 1945 it was either salvaged from Finschhafen Harbour, or had been repaired earlier and was now in the Philippines. Whichever is true, it is known that in January 1946 it was brought back to Australia as deck cargo, and put back in the water in operating condition where its new use as a cruiser began. Tom McLean, "Captain Tom", a 46 year old returned soldier of the Second AIF purchased SHANGRI-LA at an auction on 16 February 1946 from the Commonwealth Government. He took it north to Mackay almost immediately and rebuilt the cabin to suit passenger and charter work for tourists. It was then part of the Roylen Company and amongst its tasks was towing the newly created glass bottom boats out onto the Great Barrier Reef. SHANGRI-LA also operated 3-day reef cruises out of Mackay, Queensland. The Roylen Company used SHANGRI-LA for almost two years and then sold it in good condition to the Lindeman Island Company owned by the Nicholson family. They operated SHANGRI-LA for 17 years and it was the main supply and passenger vessel for the Mackay - Lindeman Island route. On the 4th August 1976 a function was held at Lindeman Island to celebrate 30 years of the Tourist Industry of Queensland. The then premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen travelled to the island on the SHANGRI-LA and made a memorable speech marking the fact that the four billion dollar Queensland tourist industry which employed 11 percent of the state's workforce started with the SHANGRI-LA. He praised its 'indispensible and pioneering role'. Unfortunately this was SHANGRI-LA's swan song and it was put on the market soon after. In 1981 Peter Davoren purchased SHANGRI-LA and only used it as a private vessel based out of Hastings in Victoria, until it was bought by Tim Berrigan in 2003. Tim Berrigan applied for a Seaworthiness Certificate in 2003 but was refused so he set about rebuilding the craft to make it operational under survey again. He purchased boatbuilding timbers including Tasmanian blue gum for the keel and Tasmanian celery top pine, assisted by his brother Steve Berrigan. Sadly Tim Berrigan died in 2010 with the vessel still unfinished and out of the water in Victoria. Late in 2011 SHANGRI-LA was bought by new owners who plan to restore the vessel to its former condition. Prepared with assistance from the Register of Australian and New Zealand Ships and Boats compiled by Mori Flapan; www.boatregister.net and research by Steve Berrigan.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 17.3 m x 4.33 m (56.76 ft x 14.21 ft)