

Introduction

In 2011 it was 111 years ago that the Danish fishing cutter 'Rexona' was built in Frederikshavn in Denmark. At the moment the Rexona is one of the few Danish cutters from this period still sailing. She is the remembrance of the Golden Age of the Danish and North Sea fishing industry around 1900. The Association Rexona, the current owner of the cutter, would like to pay attention to the important role of North Sea fishing and the meaning for industry, economy and regional development during 1850-1920. The Danish fishing industry and cutters took the lead in the fast development of off shore fishing due to revolutionary inventions and the development of a modern fishing fleet. The Rexona is the remaining cultural heritage from this period. She belongs to the last generation of cutters before the mechanization and centuries of knowledge, experience and tradition are expressed by her excellent sailing qualities. She sails like a swan, as a former crew member in Lemvig said during an interview. The Rexona symbolizes centuries of shipbuilding, methods of fishing and navigation skills. The Rexona is the sailing cultural heritage from this period. The Association Rexona wants to restore the cutter in the authentic style, to sail to Denmark and ancient fishing grounds and put the important role of North Sea fishery to the attention of the public and to institutionalize cooperation with European partners.

Association Rexona

The Association Rexona (www.verenigingrexona.nl) is the owner of the cutter. The Members of the Association are devoted to maintain this unique ship and to pass knowledge, experience and skills with regard to sailing, maintenance, construction and the original use of cutters for offshore fishing. The goal of the Association is to keep the Rexona sailing, to offer this opportunity to the public and to take care of this cultural heritage. Income of the Association is generated from the annual contributions of members, donations and contributions for sailing. This income just covers the annual expenses for maintenance and administration. Experienced skippers educate 'crew' on the job, in order to pass the knowledge, skills and experience to newcomers and new generations. During the winter the members carry out the regular maintenance activities. Big reconstructions are done by professional ship yards. The main reconstructions are financed by sponsors, subsidies and donations. Training weekends for crew, navigation crew and captains are being organized in the spring. Passengers are 'crew' during sailing trips. There are 12 sleeping cabins, kitchen and toilet facilities. The Rexona currently sails only on Netherlands inland waters, Wadden Sea and IJsselmeer. After the reconstruction the ship will be seaworthy and can sail to Denmark and in the North Sea area. The web-site provides further information.

Mission Statement

The Association Rexona wants to raise awareness of the important role of North Sea fisheries during 1850-1920 in Denmark and the Netherlands in particular and to put regional development, Seine fishing as sustainable fishery and shipbuilding in the centre of the attention.

History Rexona

The Rexona has been built in 1899 by the shipyard Olsen in Frederikshavn. She is a 'Frederikshavn cutter for Seine fishing. She was registered in Frederikshavn under the name 'Nevada', registration number FN 57, with a motor of 12 hp, 17 meters long, 5 meters wide, depth 2 meters, 28 GNT (37 BNP). She was made of oak and had a Swedish engine. She was one of the bigger cutters. The first owner was C. Ambjørn, who sold the boat in 1916 to J. Carlsen. From 1917 she was registered in Esbjerg, under registration E 365. The new owner was L.G. Jensen. S. Enevoldsen was the new owner from 1929 and he renamed her to 'Rebekka'. In 1933 the new owner was A.C. Nielsen, who renamed her again, to 'Karen'. In 1961 the new owner was K. Piet, who gave the present name 'Rexona', registered in Lemvig under registration number L 386. Other owners were V. Poulsen and from 1975-1977 N. Bech Larsen. The summer harbour was in Thyborøn. The Rexona was used as fishing vessel until 1977 when she stopped fishing.

In 1977 she was sold to Sam (Piet) Kaptein, a Dutchman, married with a Danish woman. He regularly bought Danish cutters, renovated them and sold them afterwards in the Netherlands. He sailed to the Netherlands by motor power (the Rexona had a 2 cilinder Hundested motor (96 hp) and dragged also the cutter 'Nordstøm' to the Netherlands. The Rexona had a wheelhouse, but no mast anymore. From 180 the new owner was Victor van Dalen, who renovated and repaired the Rexona. He put a new mast and sails, removed the wheelhouse and did many other reparations. In 1984 he sailed back to Esbjerg and in 1985 he made a tour to Norway, Sweden and Denmark. At this occasion he visited Lemvig, where he met the last owner and some former crew. In 1997 the Association Rexona was established. The present homeport is Den Helder, the main Marine harbour in The Netherlands. The Rexona has been recognized as sailing monument by the Dutch authorities (National Register Sailing Monuments, Nr. 753).

Offshore Fishery 1850-1920

The Danish Seine fishing (*Snurrevodfiskeriet* in Danish) was invented in 1848 by Jens Laursen Vaeve (1822-1914), who lived in Krejbjerg in Jutland, Denmark. By this method a large part of the bottom of the sea is surrounded by ropes and a fishing net, casted by the fishing vessel. The vessel hauls in the nets afterwards, the fish is hunted down in the net and caught. Frederikshavn was in 1880 the first harbour where Danish Seine fishing was introduced on a large scale. Before that time fishing took place close to the coast in small boats or even from the beach. Mainly white fish (codfish and haddock) was caught. By the new fishing method large quantities of flatfish were caught. Danish Seine fishing became the most common method in Jutland and it was introduced soon afterwards in England, Germany, Scotland, Sweden, Norway, Island and Ireland. In the Netherlands it took some longer and Danish Seine fishing was introduced only after the First World War. Danish Seine fishing came at a moment of industrialization, urbanization and a fast growing population and there was a growing demand for food and fish in particular. From an economic perspective flatfish was much more interesting than white fish. Danish Seine fishing also caused a revolution in the ship building industry.

There was a growing demand for larger ships, which could fish further offshore and could reach new fishing grounds. From 1898 the Danish government, acknowledging the economic possibilities, granted loans to build fishing vessels. The fishing industry became an important sector and towns along side the West-coast of Jutland rapidly developed. Within a few decades the small town of Esbjerg became the most important harbor of Jutland. After 1900 the development went even faster by the mechanization of the fleet and introduction of new means of transport to distribute fish. It was the Golden Age of the Danish fishing industry, which should last until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

Danish Fishing vessels in Jutland about 1900

Until the appearance of Danish Seine fishing the most common fishing vessel was the 'Bohulenske' model. This was a small boat, appropriate to fish close to the coast. The net was casted in the sea by a small boat, the kutterjol. Danish Seine fishing led to a revolution in the construction of fishing vessels from 1880 onwards. The vessels became much larger, fit for sailing on high see (North sea) and with a storage for fish and a special fish barrel for living flatfish (up to 4 000 fish), which was kept alive. The architect E.C. Benzon from Frederikshavn started with designing (big) vessels for Danish Seine fishing in 1885. These cutters belonged to the 'Frederikshavn' model. This was the beginning of a new generation of cutters, with an average of 25-30 GNT, about 50 feet long, 6-7 feet deep. The largest vessels had even 35-50 GNT. The vessels remained weeks on sea before returning to the harbor. Around 1900 there were about 200 cutters with more than 10 GNT (from which less than 100 with more than 20 GNT). The number of crew was five or six.

The bigger vessel had a main gaff sail, small gaff sail, topsail, jib, fore sail and occasionally a small mast on the afterdeck. The mechanization of fishing vessels started from 1885 with a small steam motor (3-5 hp), which was used during maneuvering or windless periods. Sailing remained dominant. Around 1900 the 200 bigger cutters were equipped with semi-diesel engines, in 1920 about all 4 600 Danish fishing vessels had a motor and the sailing vessel belonged to the past.

Project

- Organizing of events in cooperation with local municipalities, museums and professional organizations
- Research, publications and discussions about Seine fishing and the period 1850-1920 in North-west Europe
- Publishing the book about The Rexona from historical perspective, dealing with off shore fishery, shipbuilding and regional development 1850-1920
- Documentary about this history with the Rexona as main character.
- Sailing with the Rexona
- Danish Foundation Rexona and Danish homeport for the Rexona

Aims

- Restoration and conservation of the Rexona as Museum ship for Seine Fishing
- Danish homeport and Danish foundation for the Rexona and
- Maintenance of the maritime, cultural and economic heritage of offshore fishery
- Institutionalization of Dutch-Danish and European cooperation in the longer term
- Raising awareness of sustainable fishery and the (historical) relevance of sea fishery

Target groups

- Danish and Dutch public
- Other North Sea and East Sea countries

Sustainability

The Association would like to establish long term cooperation with Dutch, Danish and other European partners in the region and to sail annually to Denmark and other North Sea and East Sea countries. Accompanying events will raise the awareness of the public with regard to the relevance and role of sea fishery and sustainable fishery by Seine fishing in particular.

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