

Elissa – 140 Years and Still Sailing.

Stanley Bruce, Dec. 2017.

19th December 2017 will mark the 140th anniversary of the maiden voyage of the Aberdeen built sailing vessel 'Elissa'. She was launched from the shipyard of Alexander Hall & Co., Footdee, Aberdeen on the 27th October 2017. She is a 3-masted sailing barque, named after a Phoenician princess Elissa in the epic Roman poem 'The Aeneid'. She was built for trade with Australia.

She wasn't the first, she wasn't the biggest (far from it Hall's 'Schomberg' was 5.5 times bigger at 2,600 tons). She was nothing special, however, she has a remarkable tale to tell for she is a survivor, and the only 19th century Aberdeen built sailing ship still sailing.

Her hull was built of iron (Riveted) in 1877 at the Footdee yard of Alexander Hall & Co. (Yard No. 294), for Henry Fowler Watt, Wavertree, Liverpool, at a cost of £8,000. She like many other clipper ships built by Hall's donned the world renown 'Aberdeen Bow'.

Brothers, William Hall (1806 to 1887) and James Hall (c1804 to 1869), sons of Alexander Hall (1760 to 1849) first fitted this style of bow to the schooner rigged coaster the 'Scottish Maid' (142 tons) in 1839.

She sailed on her maiden voyage 19th December 1877, when she carried a cargo of Welsh coal to Pernambuco (now Recife), Brazil, where she arrived on 28th January 1878.

She is currently owned by Galveston Historical Foundation, Galveston, Texas, who in 1975 had the foresight to save her from a salvage yard in



*Elissa - Letting the wind do its job!
(Terry Canup).*

Piraeus, Greece at a cost of \$40,000 USD. It was 1979 however, before she was towed across the Atlantic to Galveston. In 1985 she made her first voyage as a fully restored ship.

Today she can be visited in the Texas Seaport Museum, Galveston, where she has been lovingly restored to the original design. She is one of the oldest ships in the world that can still be sailed thanks to the Foundation and a dedicated team of volunteers. She first visited Galveston as a merchant cargo ship in 1883, and lastly in 1886, hence the connection with the port.

Principal Dimensions:

- Length at waterline - 141 ft.
- Length stern to tip of jib boom – 205 ft.
- Beam - 28 ft.
- Figurehead – Full size female.
- Displacement - 620 tons.
- Gross Registered Tonnage - 430 tons.
- Draft - 10 feet, 6 inches (3.2m).
- Height - 99 feet, 9 inches (30.4m) from keel to top of the main mast.
- Miles of rope- 4.5.
- Sails – 19 in total, giving a surface area of 11,500 square feet (1,068m²). A quarter of an acre in surface area when fully rigged.

Sailing ships are classified by the configuration of their rig. Elissa is a Barque, which means she carries square and triangular fore-and-aft sails on her foremast and mainmast, but only triangular fore-and-aft sails on her mizzenmast (Aft mast).

During her long life, she was sold and renamed several times:

1897/8: She was sold to Norwegian owners Bugge & Olsen, for £8,000, and was renamed 'Fjeld'.

22nd Feb. 1912: She was sold to Holmström & Co., Torekov, Sweden.

March 1912: She was sold to H.A. Höglund & Carl Constantin Johansson, Kalmar, Sweden, and renamed 'Gustaf'.

26th Oct. 1915: She was sold to Nils Österman & Co., Stockholm, Sweden.

22nd May 1916: She was sold to August Gilbert Melin, Marstrand, Sweden.

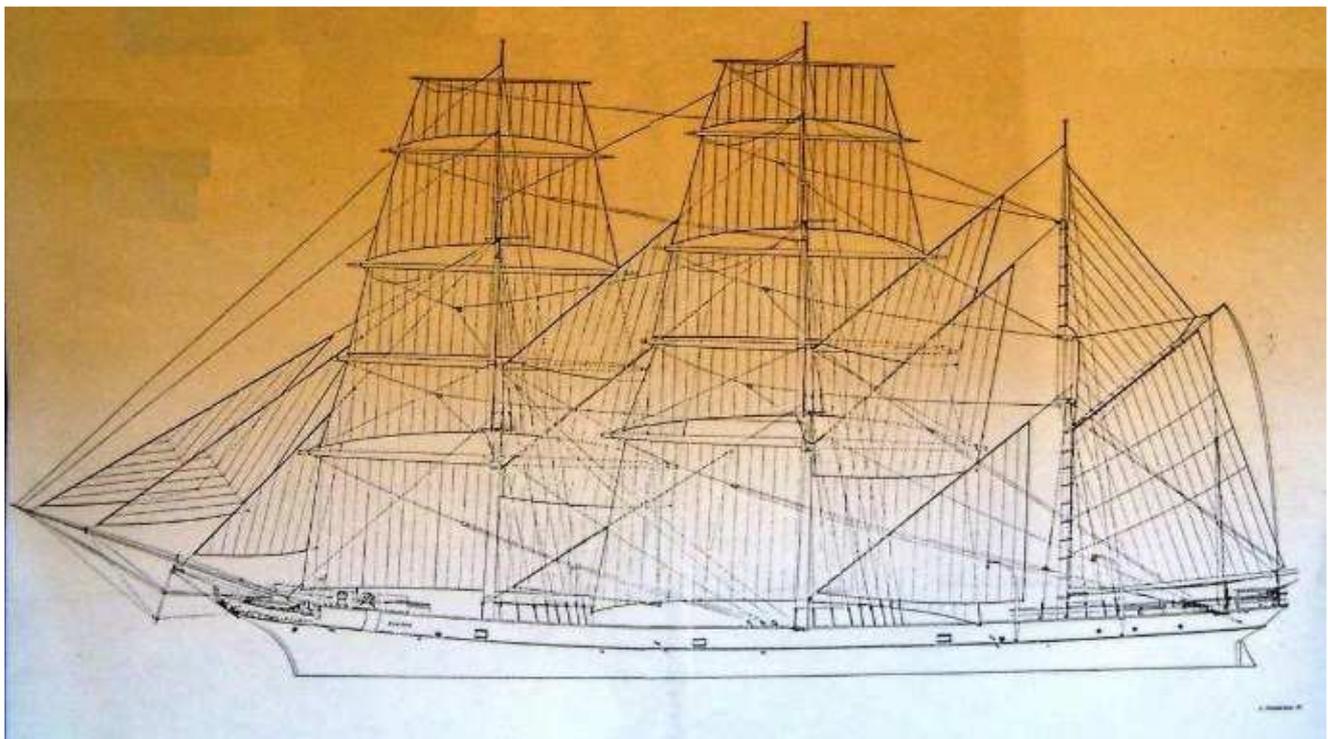
27th Sep. 1918: She was sold to the Sven Salén, Gothenburg, Sweden.

1918: She was converted into a brigantine (two masts) and had an engine installed.

23rd Sep. 1919: She was sold to William Millar, Gothenburg, Sweden.

25th Sep. 1929: She was sold to John Millars Eftr A/B. (Ernst Ludvig Ramberg), Gothenburg, Sweden for SEK 5,500.

31st Oct. 1929: She was sold to Erik Nylund, Mariehamn, Åland, Finland, for SEK 23,000.



Elissa sail plan. (Hall Russell).

1936: Her masts were removed and her clipper bow removed when she was converted to a motorship.

1942: She was sold to P. Molander Oy A/B, Pori, Finland, however she was registered in Sideby, Sweden.

1950: She was transferred to Molander Oy Telmita A/B, Kristinestad, Finland.

1956: She was sold to Rederi AB Gustaf (Hugo Boström), Helsinki, Finland.

Dec. 1959: She was sold to A. Kavadas & D. Vassilatos, Piraeus, Greece, and renamed 'Christophoros'.

1968: She was sold to M. Christidou, P. Konidaris et al., Piraeus, Greece, and renamed 'Achaios'.

1930: She was sold to Finish owners Gustaf Erikson, and converted to a schooner.

1959: She was sold was sold to Greek owners and renamed 'Christophoros'.

1961: Peter Throckmorton, a nautical archaeologist, recognized her in Piraeus, Greece, and began efforts to raise awareness of her plight and to ultimately save her.

1967: She was renamed 'Achaeos'.

1969: She was renamed 'Pioneer'.

1970: She was saved from being scrapped in a salvage yard in Piraeus, Greece when she was bought by Peter Throckmorton, curator at large for the National Maritime Historical Society. Throckmorton mortgaged his house to buy her from Greek smugglers.

1971: The San Francisco Maritime Museum expressed an interest in buying her, but financial difficulties prevented the sale.

1972: A sponsor in Vancouver, British Columbia expressed an interest in buying her, but it too fell through.

Oct. 1975: She was saved from a salvage yard in Piraeus, Greece, and sold to the Galveston Historical Foundation for \$40,000.

20th July 1979: She arrived in Galveston.

4th July 1982: After almost 3 years of a multi-million dollar restoration (\$4.2 million) she opened to the public as a floating museum in the port of Galveston.

Shortly after William Hall's death a marble bust of him was obtained by public subscription and placed in the Aberdeen Art Gallery.



Marble bust of William Hall, Aberdeen Maritime Museum.

Sadly, all there is left in Aberdeen from this date is the former premises of the Aberdeen Iron Works, which from 1864 to 1992 was the Engine Shop of Hall Russell & Co., Shipbuilders & Engineers.

Elissa remains a testament to the greatness of Alexander Hall, shipbuilder of Aberdeen.

For more information on Elissa and the Texas Seaport Museum, visit www.galvestonhistory.org



Mock up of Alex' Hall & Co. Ltd. workshop, Galveston, Seaport Museum. (The late John Patterson).

Most clippers were 3-masted square rigged ships, however it was found by 1862 that the rig of a barque, made the vessel faster. This was because on a ship the mizzen mast which had the smallest sail area blanketed the main mast spread in a following wind.

If it wasn't for Peter Throckmorton she would have probably been broken up by now. We are now very fortunate that she has been lovingly restored to her former glory, and is in the safe keeping of good hands, it's a shame she's not here in Aberdeen.



Ruby Patterson, Tracy Brummer (Leblanc), and Helen Cruickshank, at the wheel of Elissa. (The late John Brummer).



Hall's Quay sign, Aberdeen Harbour. (S. Bruce).

Stanley Bruce, BSc., I.Eng., MIMarEST

December 2017.

Former employee Hall Russell Shipyard, Footdee, Aberdeen. (1980 – 1991).