

Traditional Yachts

In addition to traditional working boats, Exeter Heritage Harbour is also home to a number of yachts that are listed on national historic boat registers.

There was a point when traditional wooden boat-builders, finding that their original livelihood of constructing working craft was disappearing, transferred their skills into leisure craft work. This survived until the arrival of GRP changed the boating world for ever. At Exeter, we think it is interesting and very worthwhile to recognise and celebrate that relatively short historical period.

The boats include:

Alexa



Alexa was built in 1934 by K. R. Skentelbery of Plymouth to the designs of Dr. Thomas Harrison – Butler, a very well known and celebrated pre-war yacht designer. Indeed, there is now a flourishing association dedicated to the preservation of vessels built to his designs. One of *Alexa's* previous owners was in fact a former Chairman of the association.

Rigged as a Bermudan Cutter, She displaces 8 tons and is 30ft long and 8ft 9inches in the beam with a 4ft. 9 inches draught.

She is being restored to her former glory by her present owner and was re-launched in Exeter Canal Basin for the first time in ten years during autumn 2024.



One of *Alexa's* former owners was Captain (later Rear-Admiral) Robert Spencer Warne CB CBE. A celebrated war-time submariner, his picture shows him as the very embodiment of a Second World War naval officer.

Many of *Alexa's* adventures in the late 1950s, in the ownership of Captain C W McMullen DSC RN, are recorded in the Royal Cruising Club Journals. In particular, his article on an Eastabout Cruise of the United Kingdom was awarded the RCC Challenge Cup in 1958.

These voyages took *Alexa* to both the northern and southernmost outposts of the British Isles.

Dido of London

Dido of London was built in 1937 by Blackmore and Sons, in Bideford. She is a gaff cutter of traditional larch on oak frame construction with a length overall of 27ft plus 9ft bowsprit. She is 8ft 8 in the beam and has a draft of 5ft.

She was designed as a Gentleman's yacht, based on the lines of local working boats and is believed to be the oldest known registered Blackmore and Sons boat.



It is understood that she was originally commissioned by an officer of the Royal Navy cruiser, *HMS Dido*, also launched in 1937.



The present owner is carrying out a full restoration. She has had major hull plank repairs, bronze fastened, new transom above waterline, new oak deck beams and a Douglas fir and pitch pine deck. A new Douglas fir mast was completed in 2007.

90% of the timber used in restoration is reclaimed pitch pine from London docks and prime Oak and larch from old local farm buildings.

The restoration of boats such as those the above, often by dedicated owners, adds greatly to the atmosphere, interest and life of the harbour area.

We look forward to welcoming other traditional leisure craft to Exeter Heritage Harbour.



Please note:

Boarding all vessels is strictly prohibited without the owner's consent.

Vessels listed here are not always present throughout the year. Itineraries vary.