



SOUTHAMPTON YACHT SERVICES LTD

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FALKA

Principle Dimensions

Type:	Single screw motor launch
LOA:	52 ft
Beam:	10' 6"
Draft:	4' 11"

History

Falka was ordered by the Admiralty from William Fife and Son in 1918 for the Royal Naval Air Service. She was designed for general service and towing duties, and another version, a seaplane re-fuelling tender, was built at the same time. These two launches were yard numbers 674 and 675 although it is not known which was which. William Fife and Son's shipyard was at Fairlie on the Clyde and was the most famous builder of great classic racing yachts in the early part of the twentieth century. Although known for the beautiful schooners, ketches and cutters, many of which are still racing today, Fife also built a fair number of motor launches and steam pinnaces during the first world war. Very few of these have survived.

The original drawings are still in existence in the Fife archive and they show the two configurations of this launch. The arrangement of the towing beam amidships can still clearly be seen on *Falka* as it is today. The class of towing launches was referred to as the "Kelvins" due to the fact that these vessels were fitted out originally with Kelvin 50hp engines. This was a slow running, petrol paraffin engine of very large size, and there is good documentation of this engine in the archives.

It is not clear exactly when *Falka* was retired from service with the RNAS although further research would probably unearth this. What is known is that during the 1930s *Falka* was owned by the Earl of Home and was later used as a Post Boat in the Western Isles of Scotland. From the 1950s onwards she was in private ownership.

At some time in her life a wheelhouse and deckhouse were added onto the existing deck, but the underlying structure remains virtually unaltered according to the original drawings. Many details of the construction used by the famous Fife yard can still be seen, including the scribed waterline and the details of frames, knees, lodging knees etc. Many of the original fittings are still in existence including the rudder, propeller, stern tube, shaft couplings, bollard, skylights and steering sheaves. At some time during her life the Kelvin engine has been replaced by a 5 cylinder Gardner diesel engine.

Falka's Future

Falka is in a very dilapidated state and has been rescued from a berth in Plymouth to prevent further deterioration in order to save a unique example of Fife's work. The hull has exceptionally pretty lines and there are a number of options for a method of restoring her and making her a useful vessel, while still retaining as much of the original vessel as possible.