

S/J Mathilde

A faithful workhorse restored after a hundred years of service

Mathilde is a representative of the faithful workhorses that have tirelessly carried cargo on seas of coastal Norway. She was built as a sailing vessel, converted to motor and after one hundred years of service restored once again to her original specifications.

Building and operation

Ship builder Ola H. Nerhus from Ølve in Kvinnherad laid the pine keel of Mathilde's 73 feet long sloop hull sometime during the 1880's. In order to find suitable materials for the construction of the vessel he rowed across the sound where the old pine trees grew, providing exactly the right material for a strong hull.

This was at the height of the sloop building era. The design had reached the peak of its development, from the clincker -built and square- rigged *jekt*, via gaff-rigged "square-sailed freighter", to highly specialized freighters with full hulls and rigging towering towards the sky. Hardanger folk were dominant in the freight trade. The jakt (sloop) and galeas (galley) were the tools of their trade.

Mathilde was named for a highly respected female member of the family. The ship was built as a speculative venture in common with many others at that time. The Nerhus family ran her for a while before she was sold to a group in Jondal, who used her in the fish trade, buying fish from Northern-Norway in the so-called Nordlands Route. Mathilde was sold out of the district in 1916 and changed owners several times during the years that followed. She had her first engine installed in 1937, her rigging was reduced, and she was renamed Kari Louise. She was overhauled and modernized and had a new engine installed in 1968.

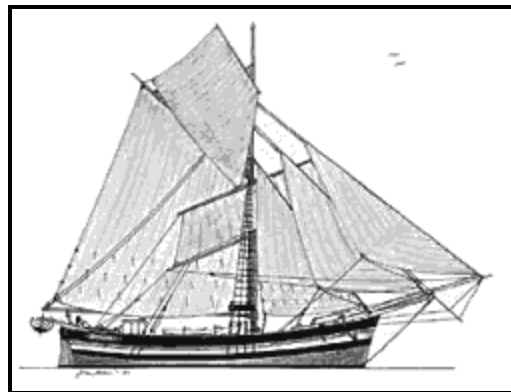
The Youth Project - restoration and start of the centre of expertise

In 1983-84 Torbjørn Kaarbø, through a commission from Kvam Rural District Council, had drafted several proposals for initiatives for the youth of the district. A project involving a ship was very desirable. The motorized sloop Kari Louise had just been advertised to be sold by enforced auction, and an inspection revealed that she was suited for the purpose. A foundation was established in 1984, and the deal was done. The Kari Louise was towed to Norheimsund. Boat builder Kristian Djupevåg from Hardanger was ensnared in the project from the very start. He was technically responsible for the very extensive restoration that started in the autumn of 1984.

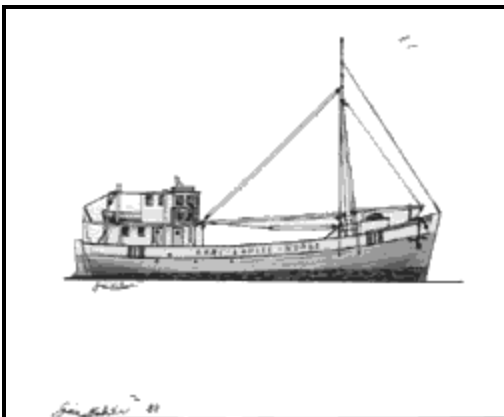
After nearly five years, the Foundation had renovated the vessel from keel to truck. All materials that needed replacement, such as timbers, planking, ceiling, deck beams and deck planks were replaced. A new interior, deck galley, a new ship's launch, and new slim, high rigging were all in place. In June 1989 we were able to re-name her the Mathilde, and she now sails along the Norwegian coast and off Hardanger most of the year. The Directorate of Cultural Heritage stated the sloop to be the best restored wooden ship in Norway at the time and an example for future restorations following antiquarian standards. The restoration of the Mathilde was the stepping-stone for establishing the Hardanger Ships Preservation Centre.

Important years in Mathilde's history

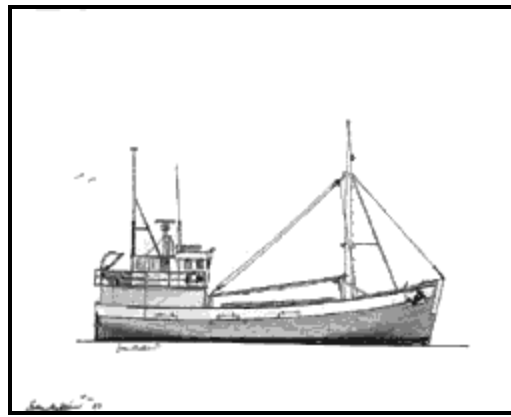
- ✂ 1884: Mathilde built by Ole H. Nerhus in Ølve, Kvinnherad. The vessel was bought by the Nerhus family for the so-called Nordland Trade, buying spring and winter cod in Lofoten and Finnmark to produce stockfish for export.
- ✂ 1889: Sold to Jondal. Same activity.
- ✂ 1918: Sold to Svolvær, sold later the same year Helgeland. Mathilde sailed as a freighter between Hammerfest and Trondheim.
- ✂ 1925: Sold by forced sale.
- ✂ 1938: Sold to Kristiansund, engaged in the *klipfisk* trade (dried, split cod). Also used as a lodging vessel for a couple of years. Reduced rigging, wheelhouse built and a 50 HP Wichmann (Rubb) installed. The conversion was carried out by the Mellemværftet Shipyard in Kristiansund around 1940. Mathilde was given the name Kari Louise.
- ✂ 1950-1968: Various owners in Hordaland.
- ✂ 1968: Sold to Svolvær in Nordland. New owner invested in a modernisation of the Mathilde, installing a 240 HP GM and built a new and larger wheelhouse.
- ✂ 1977: Sold to Herøy. In operation until 1982.
- ✂ 1984: Sold by forced auction to the Hardangerjakt Foundation in Norheimsund.
- ✂ 1989: Fully restored to its original design. Operates with camp-schools, museum trips and charters as main activities.



M/S Mathilde as a sailing sloop
1884-1942



M/S Mathilde as a motor sloop
1942-1971



M/S Mathilde, the final epoch as
motor sloop 1971-1984