

The Dutch Story of the Danish Cutter Rexona 1899-2024





Den Oever, September 2010. Photo: archive Vereniging Rexona
Photo cover: Rexona on the IJsselmeer, July 2014. Photo: archive Vereniging Rexona

Introduction

2024 is the 125th anniversary of the launch of the Danish seine cutter *Rexona* in Frederikshavn, Denmark. *Rexona* is one of the few remaining Danish fishing cutters from the days of sail, a relic from the heyday of the Danish and indeed European fishing industry in North-West Europe between 1850 and 1920. Vereniging Rexona, the current owners, endeavour to give broad attention to the importance of sea fishing, the ships and relations between the countries in this region. *Rexona* belongs to the last generation of sailing cutters from before the mechanization of the industry around 1920. Centuries of knowledge, experience and tradition are expressed in her excellent performance under sail. She symbolizes a long tradition in shipbuilding, fishing technique and seamanship. The turn of the nineteenth century was marked by industrialization, urbanization and rapid population growth and it boosted demand for cheap food. Fish provided for this need. Improved lines of transport and distribution brought remote markets within reach across national boundaries. From 1850 onwards, Denmark would be at the forefront of the development of new effective fishing methods and the design and construction of modern sailing cutters. Other countries in the region, like Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Irish Republic and the Netherlands followed the Danish example. *Rexona* represents the sailing heritage from the period. Vereniging Rexona aim to restore *Rexona* to her original glory; to navigate the seaways again; to return *Rexona* to a home port in Denmark and to bring the important role of sea fisheries, particularly the renewable 'Danish seine' fishing technique to the attention of a broader public. The project '*Rexona* Back to the Roots - Sea Fisheries in North-West Europe 1850 – 1920' was initiated for these purposes.

Association Rexona

The Association Rexona (www.verenigingrexona.nl) is the owner of the cutter since 1997. 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 (former Zuiderzee). 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

By organising the project '*The Dutch Story of the Danish Cutter Rexona* ', Vereniging Rexona aims to promote awareness of the important contribution made by the sea fishing industry to growth and prosperity in North-West Europe; Denmark and the Netherlands, in particular. The renewable Danish seine method (*snurrevodd fiskeri*), regional developments and the sailing fishing cutters are central to this interest.

Rexona's History

Rexona was built at the former ship-yard of Nikolaj Olsen in Frederikshavn in 1899, in the boom days of Danish fisheries. She's a so-called 'Frederikshavn cutter'. She was built for Danish seine fishing. In 1905 she was registered with a 12 hp inboard motor. *Rexona* has a length of 17 m. (56 ft), a beam of 5 m. (16 ft) and a draught of 2 m. (6.5 ft). With her 28-tonne displacement, she ranks among the larger cutter types. The hull is carvel built, meaning that the side planks, which like the frames are made of oak, are laid flush without overlapping. The deck is made of Scots Pine. *Rexona* was designed as a sailing ship as is clear from the beautiful clean lines and the well-defined S-bottom hull. Many characteristics of *Rexona*'s typical cutter hull are also found in North Sea cutters from the Netherlands. The rigging plan is marked by the many headsails and the long gaff, which is again something found in the Netherlands, in traditional vessel types like schuyts and luggers. *Rexona* was originally named *Nevada*, with fishing port registration FN 57. Her first owner was C. Ambjørn, who sold the ship to J. Carlsen in 1916. Frederikshavn was her home port until 1916.

From 1917, *Nevada* was registered as E 365 in Esbjerg, the fast growing sea port on the West Coast of Jutland. The new owner was L.R. Jensen. In 1929, ownership passed to S. Enevoldsen. He renamed the ship *Rebekka*. In 1933, A.C. Nielsen became the new owner and *Karen* became the new name of the ship. All this time, the fishing port registration remained E 365. But from 1961 to 1977 the home port changed to Lemvig in the North of Jutland, with nearby Thyborøn as the summer base. She was registered there as L 386 – a sign she still carries today. The new owner came up with the current name *Rexona*. Owners during this period were K. Piet, V. Poulsen and N. Bech-Larsen. With the reorganization of the fishing fleet in 1977, *Rexona* was retired. In 1977 she was sold to Dutch owner Sam Kaptein. The same year she motored to the Netherlands. The next owners were Lex van Herwaarden, Maarten van den Ende and Victor van Dalen. During this time, structural renovations were carried out. Vereniging Rexona was set up in 1997 for the purpose of restoring the cutter to her best possible condition and maintaining her, and keeping her under sail. *Rexona* has been awarded the status of sailing monument (Dutch National Register of Sailing Monuments NRVM, Nr. 753).



Rexona on the IJsselmeer, September 1997. Photo: archive Vereniging Rexona



Sailing trip September 2004. Photo: archive Vereniging Rexona



September 2008, annual cutter race Enkhuizen. Photo: archive Vereniging Rexona



IJsselmeer 18 Augustus 2007. Photo: archive Vereniging Rexona



10 september 2015, the new old bezaanmast. Photo: archive Vereniging Rexona

Sea Fisheries 1850 - 1920

Danish seine fishing (*snurrevodfiskeriet* in Danish – *snurre* and *vod* meaning 'to turn' and 'net', respectively) was invented in 1848 by Dane Jens Laursen Væver.

By this method, a large area of the sea bottom is encircled by long sea ropes (cables) and a fishing net, which are then pulled in towards the ship. The fish are rounded up by the ropes and end up in the fishnet. The method is environmentally friendly by comparison to e.g. trawling, particularly because there is little bycatch, the catch is not damaged and the net doesn't plough up the sea floor.

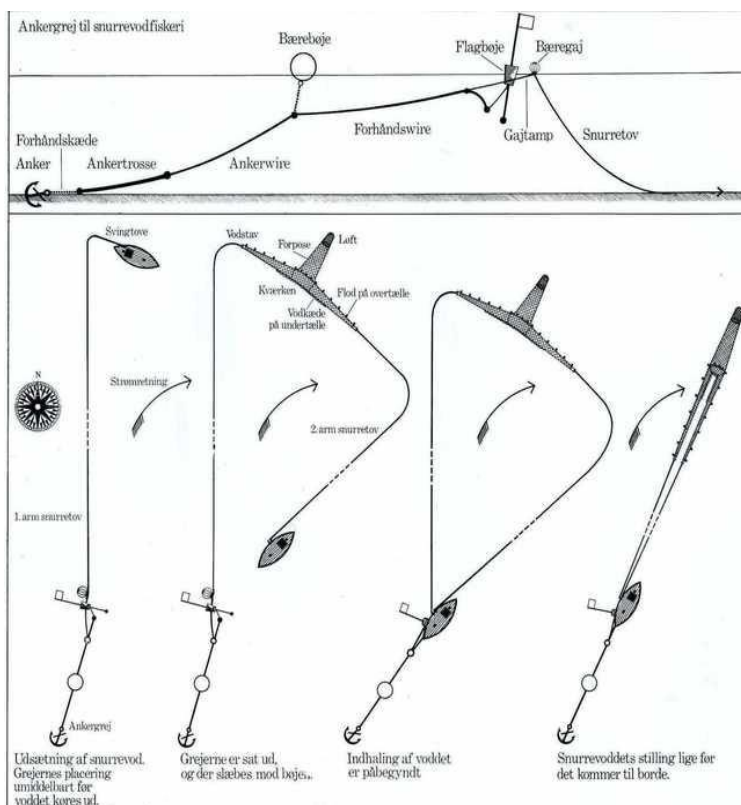
Frederikshavn was the first Danish port where this new seine method was adopted on a major scale after 1880. As of then, flatfish could be harvested alive in large quantities. The growing export opportunities and the great demand for flatfish in turn led to a rapid growth of this type of fishing. Danish seine fishing revolutionized the industry and the method was quickly adopted in other countries. Fishermen from Urk introduced the fishing method on the Zuider Zee after the Great War. The success of Danish seining meant a major boost for the fishing industry. The demand for ever larger fishing vessels kept abreast of the economic upturn. The bigger the ship, the further out and the longer the fishing could go on. Richer fishing grounds were being discovered all the time. However, after the Great War, the days of the sailing ships were over. Mechanized fishing cutters would begin to dominate the picture. The existing sailing ships were fitted out with diesel engines and sail was reduced to an auxiliary role. The fishing cutters, too, enabled the industrial revolution, urbanization and the

population explosion in the period of 1870 – 1920 and once flourishing, now dwindling fishing communities along the sea board of North-West Europe bear testimony to this.

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.

Sea-going Cutters for the Sea Fishing Industry

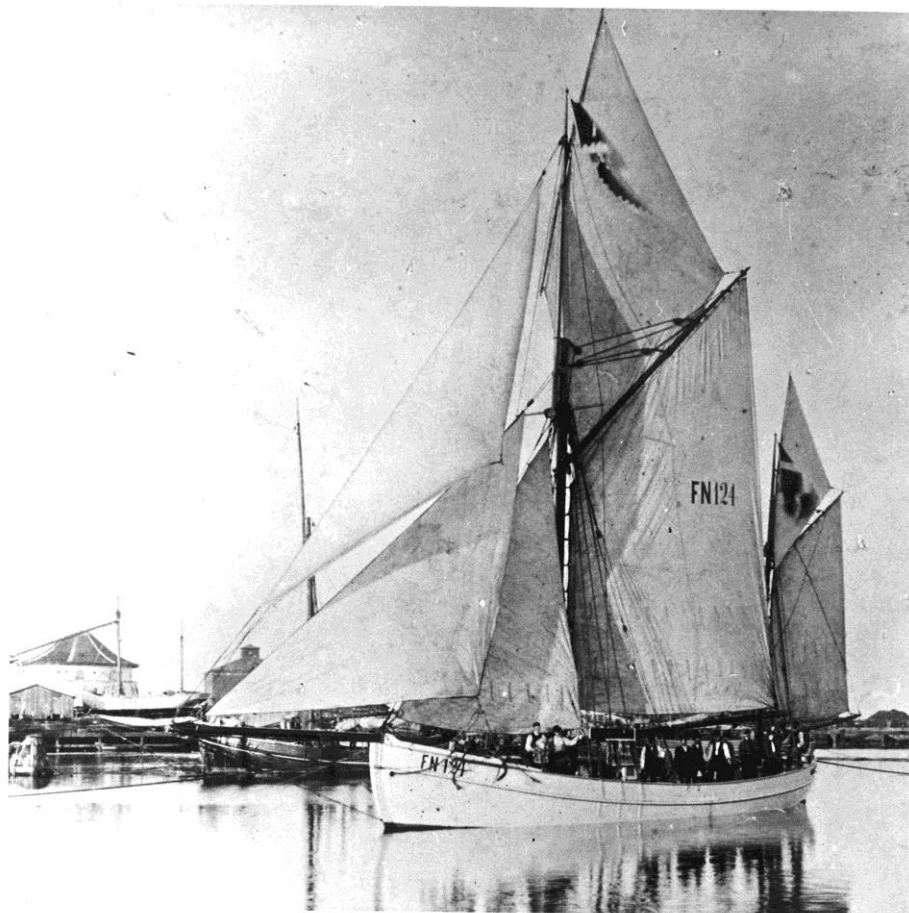
Until the invention of the *snurrevod*, the most common Danish fishing vessel was of the 'Bohuslensk' type. This was a small vessel, suitable for fishing in the vicinity of the coast, whose fishnet was set with the help of a small workboat called a *kutterjolle*. The emergence of Danish seine fishing led to the rapid development of the Danish and European fishing fleets. The ships became bigger and bigger. The crew consisted of between five and six hands. The ships incorporated a hold for dead fish (mostly bycatch like cod and haddock) and a well in which the flatfish were kept alive in sea water. The mechanization of the fishing fleet began in 1885 with the early 3 hp steam engines as auxiliaries during manoeuvres. By 1920 almost the entire Danish fishing fleet (4 600 registered vessels) were fitted with engines. The picture is the same in the Netherlands and other European countries.



Seine fishing or snurrevod



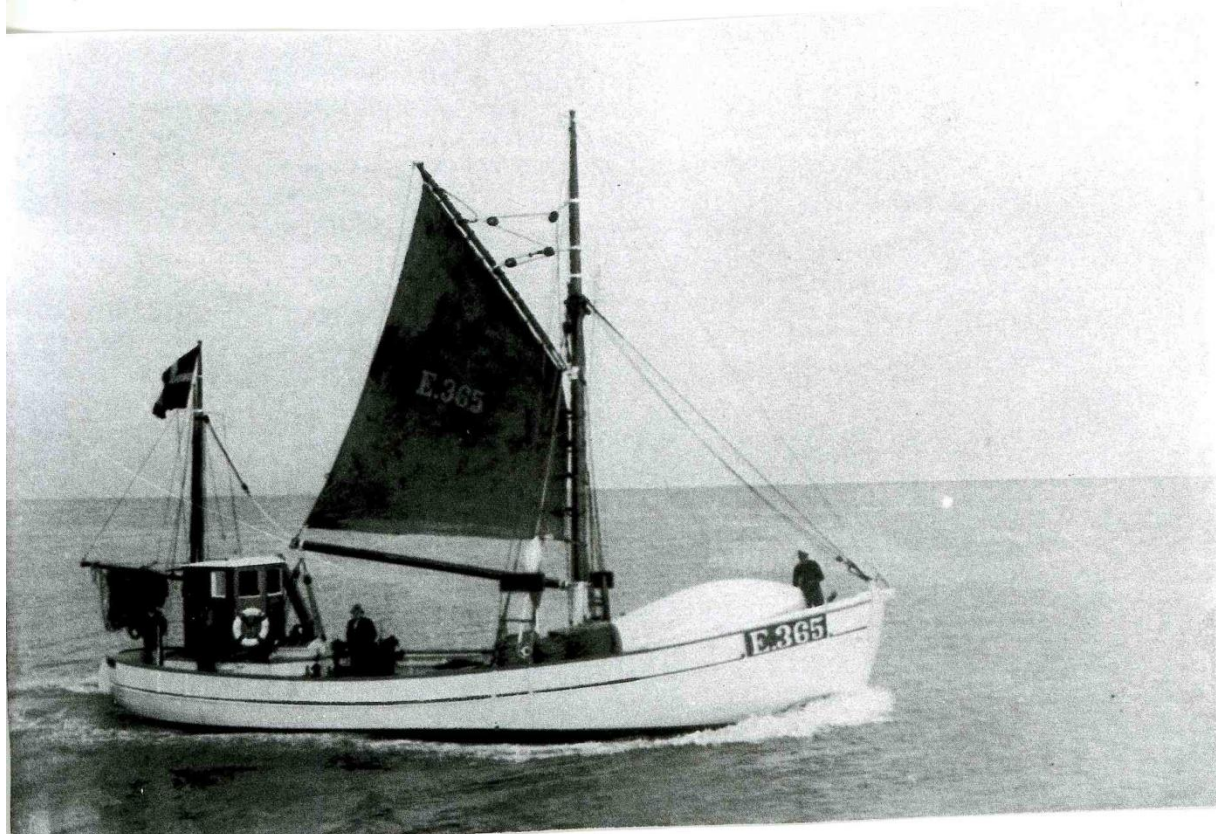
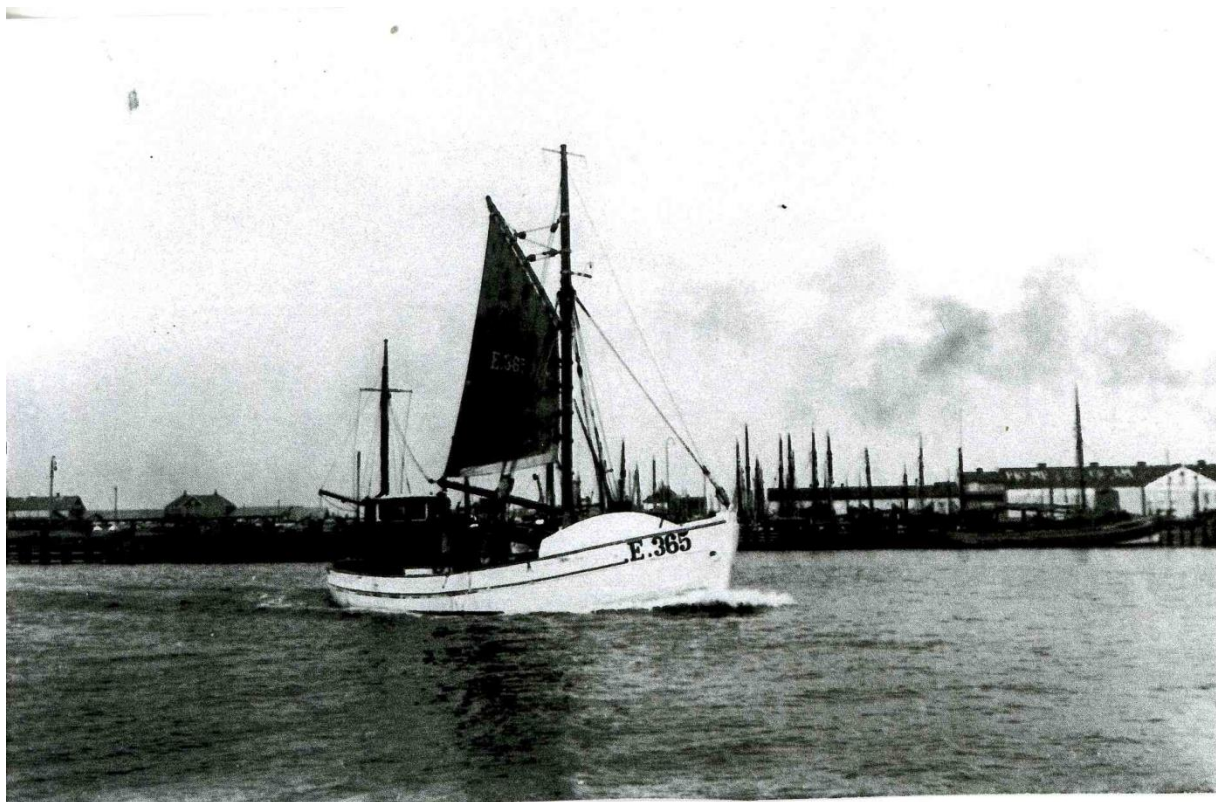
Jens Vaever (1822-1914) the inventor of snurrevod



Snurrevod cutter, around 1900, Frederikshavn. Photo: Bangsbo Museum Frederikshavn



Einar Sigurd Olsen, FN 57, nowadays L 386 Rexona, Frederikshaven, around 1915. Bangsbomuseum Frederikshaven



Karin, E 365, nowadays L 386 Rexona, Esbjerg, around 1950-1960. Photo: Shipping and fisheries museum Esbjerg.



L 386 Rexona in Lemvig, around 1970. Photo: Municipal Museum Lemvig.

Activities

- Organising events relating to sea fisheries in North-West Europe between 1850 and 1920, particularly in Denmark, the Netherlands and other North sea countries.
- Restauration of the underwatership of the *Rexona* to a seaworthy and authentic status
- Publishing a book about *Rexona* and Danish seine fishing and its significance for the region's sea fishing industry.
- Creating a documentary film: sea fishery in North-West Europe 1850 - 1920.
- Organising research, publications and debates on the sea fishing industry 1850 -1920.
- Raising public awareness of Danish seine fishing and renewable fishing methods.
- Organising sailing activities in North-West Europe for the public.
- Establishing a Danish sister association and returning *Rexona* to a Danish home port.

Objectives

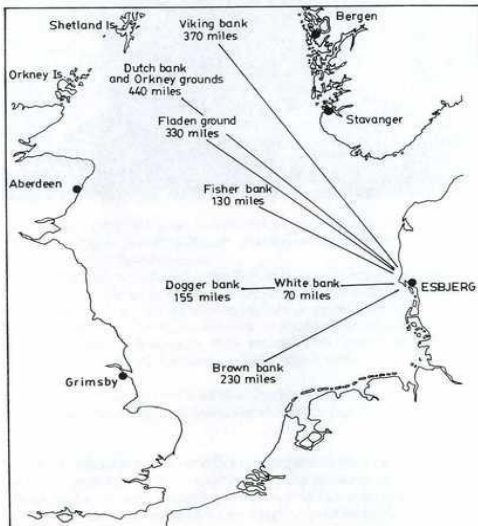
- Making *Rexona* accessible to the public as an example of a Danish seiner.
- Keeping *Rexona* under sail as a sailing museum ship.
- Maintaining the maritime, cultural and economic heritage of the sea fishing industry
- Institutionalizing Danish-Dutch and regional collaboration.
- Promoting awareness of the historic importance of the sea fisheries and renewable fishing methods.
- Giving *Rexona* a Danish home base once again.

Target Groups

- Danish and Dutch members of the public.
- Other North sea countries.

Long Term Vision

Keeping *Rexona* under sail together with Dutch and Danish partners and partners in the region, and keeping her accessible to the public. Establishing a Danish sister association and returning *Rexona* to a Danish home port. Organising events, research and publications to promote public awareness of the historic, social, cultural and economic importance of the sea fishing industry in North-West Europe.



Fishing grounds on the North sea
Shipping and fisheries museum Esbjerg.



Hans Brygge, aquarel, Lemvig, 2000. The last Danish homeport of *Rexona*.
Photo: E. Damgaard, *Byvandring i Lemvig*, (Lemvig 2002)

Fundraising renovation front of the underwater ship 2016-2017

The renovation of the front of the underwater ship costs about € 40 000. The Prins Bernhard Cultural Fund granted € 10 000, various individuals almost € 3 000, the status on September 1st, 2016. The renovation will be supervised by the wooden shipbuilding and renovation company Kuperus & Gardeniers in Lelystad.

Fundraising renovation middle and back of the underwater ship 2018-2020

The fundraising for the middle and back part of the underwater ship will start in 2017.



Restauration in Lelystad 2009/2010. Photo: archive Vereniging Rexona



The Rexona in Lemvig in 2018-2020 ? Photo: archive Vereniging Rexona

Underwaterschip renovation 2001-2020



Winter 2002



2016-2020

Contact

Vereniging Rexona, p/a Daguerrestraat 146, 1087 DJ Amsterdam, e-mail:

vereniging.rexona@gmail.com. Website: www.verenigingrexona.nl and www.rexona111.eu. Bank: NL46RABO0313420971. Contact persons: Arno Pronk, tel: 0625080151, A.D.C.Pronk@tue.nl; Maarten Koning, tel: 06 11562200, mamckoning@outlook.com.



Renovation Urk 1999/2000. Photo: archive Vereniging Rexona



Renovation Urk 1999/2000. Photo: archive Vereniging Rexona



Renovation Lelystad 2009/2010. Photo: archive Vereniging Rexona



Renovation Lelystad 2009/2010. Photo: archive Vereniging Rexona



3 november 2015, first day in Urk, Hoekman wharf



27 november 2015. Last day in Urk Hoekman wharf. Photos: archive Vereniging Rexona
Cover backside: homeport Rexona NDSM-wharf summer 2016.

