

PRESERVATION OF THE CULTURAL HISTORICAL HERITAGE OF THE BALTIC SEA FISHING INDUSTRY – RESTORATION OF THE SEASIDE OPEN-AIR MUSEUM'S UNIQUE COLLECTION OF BOATS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A BOAT HOUSE FROM 2018 TO 2021

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INTRODUCTION

The Seaside Open-Air Museum in Ventspils was established as the Sea Fishing Industry Open-Air Museum in 1954. 3 June 2022 marked 60 years since the museum opened its door to visitors. Back then, the first director of the museum, Andrejs Šulcs, started shaping the museum's collection: the first fishermen's boats, along with the houses and auxiliary buildings of the Kurzeme Region's fishermen were transferred to the museum. The collection of the Seaside Open-Air Museum currently contains more than 26,000 units.

The collection of fishermen's boats has expanded most significantly and now includes 21 pieces. The boats were used not only in our district but also in the area around Talsi, Tukums and at the seaside of Liepāja and Riga.



Fig. 1 The former boat pavilions, surrounded by old pines, prior to demolition



Fig. 2 Boat pavilions before demolition



Fig. 3, 4 The new Boat House building of the Seaside Open-Air Museum



Fig. 5, 6 Exhibits of the Boat House in winter 2022/2003

An additional solution will have to be found so that the northern end can be covered during autumn and winter. The boats are negatively affected by weather conditions as the building is of open-type design.



The place for the new Boat House was successfully chosen in the museum territory. During autumn and winter, it was found that it is insufficient with the roof alone over the exhibits. Rain and snow, especially from the northern side, filled the restored exhibits with rainwater and snow.

The restoration of the boats and building the Boat House also provided good experience for museum employees: prior to the restoration the boats were transferred to restoration workshops and afterwards moved to the new Boat House.



Fig. 7, 8 Boat transportation to the restoration workshop



Fig. 9 Layout of the boats in the new Boat House. All the restored exhibits are under one roof. Each boat has its own history. Oskar's boat (pictured right) after its restoration. Oskar's boat was featured in the movie *Fisherman's Son (Zvejnieka dēls, 1939)*.



Fig. 10 The Seaside Open-Air Museum's collection has been expanded by the fishing boat *Aira* that was used at the end of World War II to help many people escape from the coast of Northern Kurzeme to Sweden.



Fig. 11 On 24 August 2022, the Boat House received a Certificate of Recognition in the Best Wooden Building of Latvia 2021 category.

RESTORATION

A decision was made to attract financing to preserve this unique part of the collection and to develop projects for its restoration – renovation of the boats and restoration of individual fishing artefacts.

Projects:

- 1) Boat shelter construction at the Ventspils Seaside Open-Air Museum (2021);
- 2) Preservation of the Cultural Historical Heritage of the Baltic Sea Fishing Industry: Restoration of the Collection of Boats at the Seaside Open-Air Museum (2021);
- 3) Renewal of Items from Historical Fishing Boats, Cutter and Old Sailing Ships and the Development of an Exposition at the Seaside Open-Air Museum (2018).

Restoration of the boats was carried out under two projects.

All the projects implemented were supported by the Ventspils City Council and co-funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

The BOAT HOUSE construction work was undertaken by SIA BŪVFIRMA INBUV, while the functions of the contracting authority were carried out by the Ventspils Communal Administration, with the Ventspils Museum being the client for the project. The project was developed by the SIA Balts un melns architectural studio. The restoration work was undertaken by the OM Yachtland general partnership.

The restored boats, together with the Boat House, form the newest part of the exposition at the Seaside Open-Air Museum. There are 19 fishing boats in total: a cutter, motor-boats, a rescue boat, and three pieces of fishing equipment (a boat's motor, a winch and a fragment of the mast of a sailing ship). After the restoration, they are now permanently located at the new Boat House. The construction of the Boat House was completed on 4 June 2021.