

# Basic Detail Report

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## PS Marion

### Vessel number

HV000446

### Date

1897

### Description

Although planned to be a steamer PS MARION was originally built as a barge. In 1896, shipbuilder A.H. Landseer from Milang on Lake Alexandrina South Australia was commissioned to build a steamer by Mr. George Swan Fowler, a prominent Adelaide business man. Unfortunately Mr. Fowler died soon after building began, and his trustees decided that the hull should be completed and offered for sale as a barge. It was named MARION and first floated in February 1897. William Bowring kept a store in Wentworth and also traded up and down the Darling River in NSW, selling goods from a paddle steamer. In early 1900 WM Bowring & Co. bought MARION after their previous steamer had caught fire and burnt to the waterline. The barge was towed to Echuca, where Bowring built a superstructure so it could work as a store and PS MARION became a hawking steamer. Bowring imported the engine, which was built by Marshall & Sons of Gainsborough, England in 1900. The PS MARION's first trip was travelling up the Darling River on October 29th 1900. From here it worked the Darling trade, taking supplies to settlements and stations along the river. In 1908 PS MARION was sold to Ben Chaffey of Renmark, who stripped off the store superstructure and rebuilt it to carry cargo along with accommodation to carry eight passengers, the captain and crew. Chaffey also had two barges specially built for PS MARION to tow. In 1915 the vessel was used as the setting for the ceremonies which marked the initiation of the locking on the river, marking one of the first unified acts of the States under the Commonwealth. In association with the event a range of notable Australian political figures and dignitaries from the States and Commonwealth, including Prime Minister Andrew Fisher and Attorney General Billy Hughes, cruised the river on PS MARION. As PS MARION went through changes of ownership its shape and function changed. It evolved from carrying cargo with just a few passengers, then increasing the passenger capacity until eventually it became a passenger boat only. In its final working guise PS MARION had accommodation spread over three decks, including lounges on the top and middle decks while the dining room was on the main deck. PS MARION was best known along the Murray River during its time as one of the passenger steamers belonging to the Murray Shipping Limited. In December 1934 it left Morgan for the first of what became regular summer cruises. It went upstream as far as Renmark, then down to Goolwa and back to Morgan. After Murray Shipping Limited went into liquidation in 1952, PS MARION was sold a number of times and spent some years as a floating boarding house in Berri. In 1963 PS MARION was bought by the National Trust to be used as a memorial to the river navigation era. PS MARION went down river to Mannum in South Australia under its own steam on what was then thought to be its last voyage. Captain Bill Drage, who captained PS MARION during its last years as a passenger steamer, took the helm

on that voyage. For over thirty years PS MARION remained in the historic Randell Dry Dock at Mannum, where the local branch of the National Trust maintained it as a static museum. In 1989 the Mannum community and local Council decided that the best way to preserve PS MARION for future generations was to conserve and restore the boat to being fully operational. The Mannum Dock Museum was appointed to manage and develop the facilities and opportunities of PS MARION and Randell Dry Dock as the core of the Mannum Dock Museum of River History. Major restoration work was undertaken with significant volunteer assistance. The superstructure has been restored to what it was in the vessel's heyday as a passenger steamer, with cabins, lounges, dining room, galley and bathrooms. PS MARION was recommissioned in November 1994. In 2010 PS MARION is based in Mannum and is open to the public every day and runs passenger trips throughout the year, under the ownership of the Mannum Dock Museum of River History. It is still operated by its original machinery and the distinctive character of the vessel is the result of its piece-meal growth and the sometimes crude construction techniques utilized at the time. Prepared from material supplied by the Mannum Dock Museum of River History.

### **Dimensions**

Vessel Dimensions: 34.1 m x 6.7 m x 1.58 m (111.88 ft x 21.98 ft x 5.18 ft)