Basic Detail Report

Annie Watt

Vessel number

HV000318

Date

1870

Primary Maker

Wilson Brothers

Description

ANNIE WATT was commissioned by George Watt of Hobart and launched on 27 October 1870 from John Wilson's yard, then located at Port Esperance, or Dover, on the D'Entrecasteaux Channel south of Hobart. Named after his daughter Annie, the ketch (the trading ketches were colloquially known as barges at that time) arrived in Hobart early in December. On the 10 December 1870 the Hobart Mercury newspaper carried a report: 'The barge arrived in port yesterday morning... and is a remarkably pretty model, well finished and appears likely to prove a smart sailor (sic); altogether the workmanship reflects great credit on the builder. She is constructed principally of red gum and pine with decks of Kauri pine.' George Watt used the ketch on the coastal run between Hobart and Port Cygnet in the Huon Valley for about three years. In January 1874 he sold ANNIE WATT to the South Australian Flour Milling Company, run by William Ferguson and Partners. ANNIE WATT then became part of South Australia's well-known 'Mosquito fleet' of mixed trading vessels which worked in shallow areas of the St Vincent and Spencer Gulfs, carrying grain and salt to the major ports. ANNIE WATT's shallow draft, centreboard and flat-bottom configuration were ideal for this work. It saw the craft taking the high tide close to the shore, then drying out on the bottom between the tides while the cargo was transferred from horse drawn carts which came out on the sandy low tide flats. In 1878 ANNIE WATT was sold again, this time to George McKay and J Heath who, in turn, sold it to the Wakefield Shipping Company Ltd in 1882. The ketch carried wheat from Port Wakefield, situated at the head of St Vincent Gulf, down to Adelaide, a distance of about 100km. General goods were carried on the return passage. In 1952 the ketch was extensively refitted with a new keelson, frames, centreboard and ceiling planking. In 1970 it was retired from service and taken over by the South Australian Ketch Preservation Society. ANNIE WATT was placed ashore, but plans for the vessel's restoration, display and use came to nothing and it became a feature at the Birkenhead Maritime Park. In the early 1980s it was used as a film prop, dressed up as the convict ship MALABAR for a TV series based on Marcus Clarke's 'For the Term of his Natural Life'. ANNIE WATT then became involved in a short promotional tour to support the series, trucked around the state on the back of a semi-trailer low loader. In 2009 ANNIE WATT was preserved under cover in a secure storage shed as part of the South Australian Maritime Museum's diverse collection of heritage vessels. Prepared with assistance from the Register of Australian and New Zealand Ships and Boats compiled by Mori Flapan; www.boatregister.net

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 19.35 m x 5.49 m x 1.68 m (63.5 ft x 18 ft x 5.5 ft)