



Clinker Coxed Four Rowing Shell

Vessel number

HV000536

Description

The lapstrake construction of the Clinker Coxed Four Rowing Shell is a heavier and more robust form of construction than the thin cedar veneer planking used on Australian built wooden competition shells. This heavier construction, along with the moderate beam, indicates the likely use for this boat is training, and also fits with details of the Victorian Regulation Training Fours used in the 1920s -1930s. Their all-purpose design was used for training by men, women and children rowers in Victoria until the beginning of World War II. However the shortage of boats, labour and materials immediately after the war kept clinker boats in use in many clubs well into the 1960s. It was rowed by a crew of four on sweep oars and steered by a coxswain. The logical builder for this craft in Victoria is Jas Edwards, on the Yarra River, who built the majority of sculls for Melbourne clubs and schools. ANother possible builder from that state is Botterill. George Towns and Sons in Sydney NSW had a number of thier features which appear on this boat. The most notable of these are the ornate stretcher plate ends and the double scribed lines on the edge of timbers. Their

style of brass bracing rods also appear on this and many other Towns boats. This conflicting information on the same hull makes it difficult to be certain who was the builder. The hull is 11.62 m long and is planked with an imported hard wood timber which has been identified as either Borneo cedar or meranti, and the planking has some patch repairs made using an unidentified timber. The fore deck and aft deck are covered with a thin veneer of cedar ply. The boat is finished with a clear oil based varnish. The cox seat and sliding seats are made of cedar, and are fitted with brass rollers that slide along brass rod. The foot stretchers are made of spruce and pine, and are fitted with leather foot straps and steel buckles. The seats and foot stretchers are supported by a wooden frame that is reinforced with brass rods. Steering is enabled by two hemp rope cables attached to the plywood rudder's yoke and lead forward to the coxswain's seat. The outriggers that came with the shell have been replaced by ones made by the museum. According to Tom Hoffman from the Bairnsdale Rowing Club the planking is Borneo cedar, and this would

indicate it was made pre 1939 when that material was available. However the alternate identification of meranti suggests post 1945 construction, so it remains unclear just how old the craft might be. Bairnsdale Rowing Club was founded in 1873 on the Mitchell River in the Gippsland area of Victoria, where it held regular competitions. The club helped to produce many champion oarsmen and women. The club was closed in the 1960s until it reopened in 1987 and made an appeal for boats and oars from metropolitan rowing clubs. One of the donations to the club that came from Caulfield Grammar School was this clinker shell. It was then used by the club for 5 or 6 years until it was felt that it was getting too delicate. It was later donated to the Australian National Maritime Museum where it was taken into the National Maritime Collection in 2000 as an example of an Australian-built training craft. It provides a strong contrast to the German-built coxless four that won a Gold medal at the 1992 Olympic Games with the first Oarsome Foursome crew, AUSTRALIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (HV000103). In 2012 the two shells were on display together in the Watermarks Gallery of the museum.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 11.62 m x 0.71 m (38.13 ft x 2.33 ft)