

Basic Detail Report



Maitland Flood Boat

Vessel number

HV000583

Primary Maker

N & E Towns

Description

The flood boat was built by N & E Towns at their Dempsey Island boat yard on the Hunter River in Newcastle. They were one of the principle small craft boat builders in the region and built many skiffs of this type for various uses. It is clinker built with seven planks per side, and light section frames at about 225mm centres. It is fitted out with risers supporting five thwarts and the two just forward of midships are the rowing stations. A rudder was fitted, but has been lost during its lifetime and changes in ownership. The hull has a vertical stem, rounded forefoot and a transom stern. In 2007 it was refurbished by shipwright Ron Haug and replacement flooring and some new knees were installed. It has been painted cream inside and on the exterior, with the top strake left varnished. The craft has good proportions for a flood boat. At 6.70m long and 1.770 m wide it has a good balance of capacity, manoeuvrability and speed. Fore and aft of the rowing positions is space for a small number of people and their belongings allowing it to make family rescues at flooded homesteads or shorter passages ferrying from shore to shore. The history of the craft is not well documented, and it may have had a variety of recreational or other uses on the Hunter River or nearby. However it is known to have been owned by Maitland City Council and understood to have been used during the floods that occurred in the Maitland region between 1949 and 1955. The late February flood in 1955, often referred to as the Maitland Flood, is recognised as one of Australia's major natural disasters. It inundated Maitland, Hexham and nearby communities, forcing major evacuations and 25 lives were lost. This flood boat and similar skiffs, surfboats and other available craft were used extensively to rescue people caught by the rapidly rising waters. Many clung to roof tops or were isolated on higher ground waiting for rescue. After it was no longer used by the council its use and storage remain unknown, but it was found by Grahame Tumpene when he was working on a project at a Maitland High School. With assistance from Bob Hayman and Marilyn Bliss the boat was moved to Hayman's house at Lambton, then to his later residences at Coal Point and Kilaben Bay. When Hayman moved to Queensland the boat was donated to the Newcastle Maritime Museum.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 6.7 m x 1.77 m (21.98 ft x 5.81 ft)