

Basic Detail Report



Ashby Ferry

Vessel number

HV000274

Date

1936

Primary Maker

Robert Nicholson and Guy Hannah

Description

The ferry was built in 1936 by Robert Nicholson, Guy Hannah and others at Essex's Barn near the Clarence River crossing. It is 11 m x 6.25 m with 4 m landing flaps at either end. Powered originally by a 9 kW (12hp) twin cylinder Lister engine connected to a single cable on the opposite side of the ferry by a series of belts, chains, sprockets, wheels and shafting, the ferry's motor was later replaced with a hydraulic unit, which in turn was replaced in 1966 by a four cylinder motor. The ferry's single cable was 22 mm (7/8 in) thick, 475 m (1550 ft) long and secured tightly on both shores. The tension required to avoid snagging and wear on the rocky bottom meant the cable had a short lifespan of between six to nine months. Cables were only replaced when they broke and this added an element of surprise and danger to each crossing. When the cable did break the ferry drifted with the river current, sometimes for a significant distance. Eventually an anchor was carried onboard as a safety measure, however this was lost, when set by the ferry driver without being connected to its cable and chain. The Ashby Ferry had a carrying capacity of 10 tonnes, which was exceeded on many occasions. Sometimes running at around 50 crossings per day with the high volume of cane trucks, the ferry continued operating until 1974. Replaced by a larger ferry from Bluff Point, the original cable ferry remained in sporadic service as a relief vessel. In 1981 a bridge was built across the river, superseding the ferry service entirely. The local community decided to preserve the original ferry when it ended its service. In June 1981 an earth mound was built above flood level at Ashby and the old ferry was moved by low loader into position alongside Cane Punt No. 6. Both remained on public display in 2008.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 10.97 m x 6.25 m (36 ft x 20.5 ft)