

Basic Detail Report



Oscar W

Vessel number

HV000218

Date

1908

Primary Maker

Bear Brothers

Description

OSCAR W was built in Echuca, Victoria, in 1908, by Bear Brothers shipwrights for its first owner FO Wallin, who named the boat after his son Oscar. It was built as a towing/trading vessel. OSCAR W is 31.39 m (103 ft) long, 10.88m (35 1/2 ft) wide overall, and draws from 0.84 m to 1.5 m (2 ft 3 in to 5 ft 1 in). Its tonnage is registered at 83 ton gross or 59 ton net. The hull is composite construction, with riveted steel topsides and 75mm thick tallow wood and red gum planking below. It is powered by a 16 HP, 2 cylinder Marshall steam engine which was imported by Wallin and has been its engine for all of its working life. OSCAR W operated originally from the Port of Echuca carrying freight along the Edward and Wakool Rivers and up the Murrumbidgee as far as Balranald. In 1914 Charlie Wallin sold OSCAR W to Permewan Wright and Co and for the next five years it carried wool for the Riverina wool trade. In 1919 the OSCAR W again changed hands, this time to Murray Shipping Ltd and hauled wool and general cargo on the Darling River. OSCAR W was also used as a supply and equipment vessel for the building of the Murray River locks and Goolwa Barrages. In 1942 OSCAR W was sold to George Ritchie of Goolwa and again in 1943 to Perce Richards, R. Knox and Captain Tommy Goode, also of Goolwa. War restrictions forced another sale in 1943 to the South Australian Highways and Local Government Department where the OSCAR W was used for routine ferry maintenance work, based at Morgan. It was well suited to this type of work due to the powerful steam plant on board. In 1945 the Department converted OSCAR W's boiler from wood to oil firing. In 1959 OSCAR W was replaced by the tug NALTA YUKI to continue ferry maintenance work in SA. Captain Paddy Hogg purchased OSCAR W in 1959 and took it to Mildura to be used for tourist day trips. During 1962 OSCAR W towed the paddle steamer GEM from Mildura to Swan Hill. On falling river levels it was unable to return to its home port, and so it continued to Echuca where it remained for 9 months. In 1964 OSCAR W was sold to Allan Moritz of Murray Bridge and he restored the OSCAR W as a wood burner but it ceased operations during the 1970s. Moritz died in 1984 and in 1985 the SA Department of Tourism bought OSCAR W for the Signal Point River Murray Interpretive Centre. Local identity Jock Veenstra successfully tendered to repair the craft in 1987. Repair work was carried out on the slip at Murray Bridge to make the hull watertight, replacing some of the red gum planks, repair caulking and fitting a number of new steel sister frames. The boiler was also brought back to a safe operating condition. On 30 March 1988 OSCAR W steamed down to Goolwa where work on the superstructure and paddle boxes was completed. OSCAR W was re-commissioned as an operating charter vessel and tourist attraction at a function on 1 July 1988.

Two highlights soon after were an epic voyage back to Echuca in 1991 and then a record breaking non-stop run, of four days 23 hours, between Goolwa and Mildura, towing the barge DART in 1992. In 1996 the original boiler was condemned and replaced by a new welded boiler built by Forbes Australia, which was fitted in 1997. Not long after this considerable restoration work was then undertaken by the 'Friends of PS Oscar W' . This work included removal of the rusted sections of original frames, removal of sister frames and replacement of over 90 steel part frames which were galvanised, complete replacement of the wooden bottom with tallow wood and redgum planking, replacement of most floors and the decaying keelsons. Replacement of iron topsides was then undertaken where it was rusted, with new plating being welded in . The forward hold covering was replaced with welded steel to meet survey conditions but the original coamings were followed so that the original hold configuration is clearly visible. In February 2001 the Alexandrina Council took over running the OSCAR W and the barge DART (HV000221), re-uniting the two craft which had probably worked together during the period when both were owned by the South Australian Government. The pair has since taken part in many important historical re-enactments and community celebrations on the River Murray. This included the series of Centenary of Federation celebrations held between Goolwa and Mildura in 2001, the 150th anniversary of shipping on the Murray in 2003 and the 150th anniversary of Australia's first railway in 2004. OSCAR W and its faithful barge DART are open to the public and the 'Friends of the PS OSCAR W' now has OSCAR W back in commercial survey, a milestone achieved in time for its 100th birthday in October 2008. Prepared from research material published at www.woodenboatfestival.com.au

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 31.39 m x 31.39 m x 10.88 m x 0.84 m (103 ft x 103 ft x 35.7 ft x 2.75 ft) Registered Dimensions: 83 tons x 59 tons