

Basic Detail Report



Mer Jim

Vessel number

HV000220

Date

1952

Primary Maker

Roy Bliss

Description

MER JIM was built in 1952 by Roy Bliss when he was working at Norman R Wright's boatyard. It was built for Merv Hazel's family to use as a training craft. Hazel was an important and enthusiastic figure in the Brisbane sailing scene. Over his lifetime he worked on many club committees and was made a life member of a number of clubs. The Trainee class was created in the early 1930s by Brisbane sailor R 'Nip' Thorpe. Before this there were a number of similar sized training boats used by clubs and

families around Brisbane, but they were not linked together in any formal class or association. Thorpe established a set of simple restrictions around some of the characteristics common to these craft to create a single class of similar dinghies. The restrictions covered maximum and minimum dimensions, hull shape, construction and rig. MER JIM represents a boat built to these rules. It is 3.65m (12 ft) long, cat-rigged with a gunter mainsail, and shallow vee-bottom t-section throughout. The hull was designed to be simply built, with cross-planked bottom planking and each side made of a single plank of hoop pine. The Trainee became an introductory class for young sailors, prior to graduating to the more powerful skiffs and unlimited sharpies. When 'Nip' Thorpe died in 1937, 'Nip Thorpe's Navy' numbered more than 40 boats. Trainee numbers boomed after World War II, with fleets lining the Bulimba and Hamilton reaches of the Brisbane River, the Oxley Sailing Club, Sandgate Yacht Club, and Shorncliffe Training Squadron, as well as other clubs in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. In 1961 the hull specifications were revised to allow construction of lighter plywood hulls, incorporating buoyancy tanks and a Bermudan rig, and the class became known as the Thorpe class or Thorpe Trainer. The class survived until the 1990s, but is now no longer active. An attempt was made to modernise the class in the early 1990s, but by then international classes, such as the similar sized Laser, had become established in many clubs throughout Australia, displacing the locally designed classes. MER JIM was an interesting one-off variation of the Trainee design. The hull and rig were built to the class specifications of the period (the 1950s), but Hazel asked for the dinghy to be fitted with buoyancy tanks and some decking. As this was not allowed in 1952, the boat was never officially raced as a Trainee. Hazel's children, however, learnt the ropes sailing MER JIM

on the Brisbane River before moving on to bigger dinghies. In the 1990s Merv Hazel donated MER JIM to the Queensland Maritime Museum. The museum recognised MER JIM as an example of the class's original planked hulls and asked Roy Bliss to remove the tanks and decking for display. The result is an example of a Trainee class dinghy rigged to the original class specifications. Prepared from research material supplied by Queensland Maritime Museum

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 3.66 m x 3.66 m x 1.3 m (12 ft x 12 ft x 4.25 ft)