

Basic Detail Report



Nell Gwyn

Vessel number

HV000249

Date

1947

Primary Maker

John G Alden

Description

NELL GWYN was built by its owner Frank Hickman and a team of shipwrights in Hobart Tasmania and adapted from a design by American John Alden, one of the premier yacht designers of the 1930s. The project took ten years to complete, with progress clearly affected by World War II. The unusual and extremely high quality construction could also have affected the time taken to complete the yacht. The 12.19 m (40 ft) long hull and deck are diagonally planked in Huon pine, instead of building a typical carvel-planked hull on frames. The planks are copper fastened to each other and to the supporting structure. The hull has fore and aft stringers with no frames, only floors, while the deck is supported by beams. The construction method closely follows the triple and double-planked method used by the Logan family in New Zealand to build all of their yachts, where Logans took advantage of the qualities of the local kauri timber. Tasmanian Huon pine is, with kauri, one of the finest woods for yacht building. It appears that NELL GWYN's construction is a unique example of a yacht diagonally planked with Huon pine. It is possible the builders were influenced by the Logan method, because during the 1930s one of the premier racing yachts in Hobart was the Logan-built YEULBA (formerly CULWULLA), from 1901. After 60 years of hard use, NELL GWYN's hull and deck remain untouched and completely original, a testament to the quality of its construction. The planks are full length, just over 12.19m (40 feet) long, cut from logs recovered from lakes and rivers on Tasmania's west coast. There were no knots and the planks were fitted so accurately that no caulking has been used at the seams. The Alden design features a classic long keel profile, with a long counter and spoon bow. It is an ideal craft for offshore sailing with good sea-keeping qualities. NELL GWYN 's owner Frank Hickman was well known in Hobart and he raced the yacht with the local fleet, and competed in seven Sydney to Hobart yacht races from 1948 to 1969. It came fourth in the 1955 event. In 2008 the yacht had been retired from racing, and in 2014 it underwent a three year strip back and refurbishment in the workshop of Shipwrights B.R. & S.M. Webber, of Williamstown, Victoria. The original structure and layout of the vessel remains, serving as an outstanding example of Tasmanian yacht construction. In recent years NELL GWYN has cruised in Queensland, the Bass Strait, and the Southern Ocean.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 12.19 m x 3.35 m x 2.07 m, 10.83 tonnes (40 ft x 11 ft x 6.8 ft, 11 tons)