

Basic Detail Report



Sir Edward Pellow Group Indigenous Sewn Bark Canoe

Vessel number

HV000590

Date

1925

Description

The canoe is 4.6m long, 700mm wide and about 700mm high at both ends. It is made from a single sheet of stringybark. The species has not been identified, however records of other bark canoes across northern Australia show a consistent use of *Eucalyptus tetrodonta* or Darwin stringybark and this may be the type of tree used for this craft's construction. The ends are shaped to give a small amount of rake and curvature, and then finely stitched together with lawyer cane. The shape of the canoe is supported by a simple arrangement of a series of cross struts bearing against and under the mangrove wood branches forming the gunwales. Along the hull are a series of about four cross ties which pull the sides inward against the struts. The triangulation formed by the struts and ties forms a secure bracing along the hull, similar to modern methods of framing and bulkheads. There are some additional transverse sheets of bark also helping to stabilise the form of the vessel, and short branches of wood are wedged inside at both ends to hold the shape as well. Sheets of melaleuca bark serve the purpose of forming seats on the bottom of the canoe. The canoe was acquired with a melo shell bailer, a bark water carrier, and two slabs of stone used for a fire that would be kept burning to cook fish while the canoe is afloat. This type of canoe was first recorded by Capt. Matthew Flinders, who discovered the group of islands and made note of the canoes in the publication 'Voyage to Terra Australis' (p.171). Commander Harry Thring Bennett DSO, RN, (1888 -1968) was in command of HMAS GERANIUM (on loan from the Royal Navy) between 1923 and 1929 when the ship carried out survey work in Queensland and northern Australia. Records show they visited the Sir Edward Pellow group where an obelisk was erected in memory of Matthew Flinders. Amongst the crew was Surgeon Lieut.-Commander W. E. J. Paradise who had a strong interest in zoology and natural history. He was using the opportunity to collect marine animals for the Australian Museum, so it is assumed the bark canoe was also collected at this time for the museum.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 4.6 m x 0.7 m (15.09 ft x 2.3 ft)