

Basic Detail Report



Kempsey Region Indigenous Tied-Bark Canoe

Vessel number

HV000591

Date

1939

Primary Maker

Albert Woodlands

Description

The tied-bark canoe was made on the Macleay River in the Kempsey region by Albert Woodlands, an Indigenous community member from the local area. It was acquired around 1939 by the Australian Museum (E047384), possibly as a commissioned item as was the case with HV000037, another similar canoe also made by Albert Woodlands for the museum. The construction is a single piece of bark, and although the bark is unidentified it would likely be a stringybark, blackbutt or melaleuca. Unlike many bark canoes, the surfaces are not inverted on this example and therefore the inside of the canoe is also the inside surface of the bark that was adjacent to the sapwood. To form a bow and stern it is folded at each end after the bark has been thinned down and then heated to make it more supple. The folds are then lashed together and secured with a spike. A beam is pushed into place at either end as well to hold the sides out. The ends are then creased to give them some rise. This is a small canoe with very shallow depth or freeboard and this would have restricted the craft to relatively calm water use on rivers or lakes. The northern NSW coast has many rivers, and this Indigenous canoe is an example of a craft that was used on local rivers for transport, fishing and food gathering activities by the Indigenous communities. It is also a variant of the overall tied-bark canoe type which is found from lower Queensland down the coast as far as eastern Victoria. Albert Woodlands was a Kempsey district farmer and welterweight boxer who fought in the Lismore-Kempsey circuit from 1939 to 1946. Although originating from the north coast of NSW, Woodlands often resided at La Perouse where he had relatives, a connection shared by many of the families living at the La Perouse mission. He was well known in the 1930s and 1940s for his cultural knowledge and as an artist and craftsman, and was working with anthropologist A P Elkin.