

Basic Detail Report



Roger Ninham Double Surf Ski

Vessel number

HV000517

Date

1960s

Primary Maker

Roger Ninham

Description

Roger Ninham built the ski in Sydney at his Manly Vale premises. It is a timber plywood moulded hull shape with red cedar faced plywood fore and aft decking. The double cockpit seating is moulded in fibreglass, and the seats are set into the hull. Both seats came off the same mould and were trimmed to suit the hull then fitted together. This seating feature was quite revolutionary, up to this time paddlers on surf skis had sat on a flat deck at sheer level, but the moulded seat lowered the paddler's centre of gravity, and afforded a more secure seat. Pedals were fitted for the forward paddler, linked by wire to a stern or transom hung rudder, a new feature too for the surf ski, but a detail relatively common on racing kayaks. Both features were quickly adopted by other surf ski builders. It is thought the craft was most likely used at the Queenscliff SLSC on the northern beaches of Sydney. Ninham only built a few surf skis, and was best known for the design and construction of about fifty SLSA surfboats during his short career. He died in 1985 aged 42, but had achieved a great deal in rowing and surfing and was hugely respected. He was born in WA, and initially rowed competitively, representing Australia in the 1960 and 1964 Olympics, and 1962 Commonwealth Games. He worked for his father building some surfboats in WA and became involved in surfboat rowing as well. In the mid-1960s he came to Sydney, worked for a local builder for a short period then set up his own yard in Manly Vale. Warren Molloy at Queenscliff SLSC asked him to make a surf boat with a bit more rocker in the ends in 1971. This boat, which Roger had designed, built and rowed in the number 3 seat for the Queenscliff NSW SLSC crew then won the 1971 Australian National Championship in Perth WA. Warren Molloy was sweep in that boat, and recalls that Roger was 'one out of the mould', a rare character who had great feel for the boat and crew as he rowed, was innovative as a builder and always gave great assistance to other competitors. He came back from the win in WA with 13 orders for boats, and his business prospered.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 6.5 m x 0.75 m (21.33 ft x 2.46 ft)