

Basic Detail Report



Butcher Boat

Vessel number

HV000582

Primary Maker

N & E Towns

Description

The 7.8m long butcher boat is clinker built, with seven planks each side in red cedar, copper nailed and roved, one stringer each side and 41 frames. It has a double-ended hull shape, which is varnished and painted green below the water line inside and outside. It has seven thwarts, with side benches between 5th and 6th thwart. There are four poppets each side and the rudder has a yoke with attached steering rope. It has been given the accession number 1983/121. It is understood from a newspaper article that the boat originally belonged to William and his brother Ewin Bramble who were butchers before William became a carrier, starting the well-known Brambles Transport Co. Their father Walter was a butcher in Morpeth in the late 1800s. He was a "cut up and deliver" butcher, meaning he transported the meat to customers by boat or horse and cart. Two years later, he had saved enough to move his business to the rapidly growing port town of Newcastle. The boys delivered "cut meat" up and down the river in their skiffs. They also used to row out to the incoming ships for meat orders. William had Towns, either George Towns (Snr) or the sons N & E Towns build the butcher boat so he could get to the ships faster. He also employed small boys to stand watch on the hill and signal him as a ship approached the port. When this was becoming a difficult and 'cut-throat' occupation he expanded his carrying side of his business to include transporting goods to Sydney and general carrying jobs. His brother Ewin sold the butcher boat but later he found it again in bad repair and had it fixed. Its story then remains unknown until after World War II when it was owned by Maitland City Council and was used in the 1949 and 1955 floods. It was donated to the museum by the council in May 1983. The butcher boat was later restored by Jim Latham of Mayfield, who comes from a well-known Hunter River sculling family. When Jim Latham first saw the butcher boat, lined up with several boats that had been used for flood work in the Maitland area, he found it hard to believe it still existed. "It was one of the happiest moments of my life," he said. When restoration was completed the butcher boat looked as it had done originally- varnished with an emerald green keel and bottom. The butcher boat had an outing on the water in December 2011 when Tony Robinson, of the UK TV series Time Team, came to Newcastle to make a documentary about some unusual local stories. Four crew and the sweep oarsman from the Nobbys Surf Life Saving Club surfboat rowed the butcher boat around Newcastle Harbour to give the TV crew their footage.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 7.8 m x 1.62 m (25.59 ft x 5.32 ft)