

Basic Detail Report



SS Bill Fisher

Vessel number

HV000052

Date

1958

Primary Maker

Herb Robson

Description

SS BILL FISHER is a 4.58 m (15 feet) long plywood surf ski that was built by Herb Robson for John Mervyn 'Jack' O'Brien in 1958. O'Brien was a surf and fitness enthusiast and SS BILL FISHER was one of at least three skis that he owned and used off the northern beaches of Sydney where he lived. It is an example of an important stage in the evolution of the surf ski as it forms a link between the original heavy planked boats and the much lighter craft that now exist. SS BILL FISHER shares the square section shapes and wide beam of the original craft, but is made much lighter using marine plywood. The cross section has a flat bottom and slightly convex deck for the paddler, a single chine and vertical sides. The foredeck is flat with a breakwater coaming. It is also a little more refined in a number of areas. The widest point is forward of the middle, and the width is maintained toward the bow in a well rounded shape, while the aft lines taper to a fine stern and skeg. In profile the bow carries a significant amount of curve upwards to its tip while the stern runs out in a relatively straight line. This combination of features forms a very good shape for entering and leaving the surf break, riding waves to shore with good control, and general paddling in open water. 'Jack' O' Brien used SS BILL FISHER and other skis he owned to pioneer endurance paddling and to establish long distance records with journeys from various beaches near Sydney. Two significant passages he made on the SS BILL FISHER include Wollongong to La Perouse (12.5 hours non-stop) and Cronulla to Palm Beach (9hrs 10 mins non-stop). Near the stern, mounted on the deck is a St Christopher's medal. The boat was built as a double ski but modified by O'Brien to be used as a single. It is simply fitted out with three sets of leather footstraps and a breakwater coaming on the fore deck. It has been maintained in excellent condition. The SS BILL FISHER was acquired by the Australian National Maritime Museum for the National Maritime Collection in 2005.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 4.58 m x 0.77 m (15 ft x 2.5 ft)