

Basic Detail Report



Amethyst AWB 420

Vessel number

HV000792

Date

1943

Description

AMETHYST AWB420 has a carvel hull and is planked in Oregon on spotted gum frames. It is copper and bronze fastened. It has a fibreglass wheelhouse, saloon cabin and large, open aft cockpit. The fibreglass wheelhouse with full standing headroom was fitted by the RAN in the 1971 and is an example one of their earliest pieces of construction using fibreglass materials. The workboats were initially powered by Cadillac or Chrysler 175hp petrol engines while later craft were installed with Gray Marine 64HN9 diesel engines. Eventually most vessels were converted to these engines, which gave them a speed of about 9 knots. The workboats were almost all commissioned between 1943 and 1946, and allocated duties around Australia and New Guinea. They were employed in numerous ways including carrying supplies, personnel transport, ambulance work, refrigerated goods transport and patrol duties. AMETHYST AWB420 served as AM1635 with the Army in World War II as a workboat for about 15 years before it was transferred to the Royal Australian Navy around 1959 or earlier, and then renumbered AWB420, its current classification number. In 1971 it was allocated to the Flag Officer Commanding East Australian Area (FOCEA), Chief Superintendent of Supply (CSS) and Superintending Armament Stores Officer (SASO) at Sydney. In December 1987 it was then attached to the Spectacle Island Armament Depot at Sydney. AMETHYST AWB420 is now the only remaining craft of the original armaments boats serving between the depots at Spectacle Island and Newington on the Parramatta River. Amongst its other general duties tasks was towing up to 12 Snapper Island whalers to their whaler races off Rushcutters Bay, held by RANSA on two occasions each year up until the 1990s. It has served in the military for 76 years since launching in World War 2, and has been operating with the RAN for nearly six decades. It remains in service and is one of the Spectacle Island 'fleet'. The origins of the design are attributed to builder Botterill and Fraser in Victoria, but it has also been noted that the design is almost identical to a 50-foot workboat in North America. It may be that a North American design was adapted to suit mass production construction in Australian factories. These yards included Botterill & Fraser in Melbourne, AT Brine from WA, along with the vehicle builders General Motors at their Victorian and South Australian plants, and the Ford Motor Company in Victoria. The 40-foot workboats were often built by tradesmen and factory workers, with a skilled foreman overseeing the production. The builder's name was usually cast into the steering wheel. Most of the 40-foot workboats were constructed for the Australian Army and given AM prefix numbers, but some were also built for the Royal Australian Navy and the RAAF. Records show a large list of allocated numbers, and it is known that some of these were probably never built. The 40-foot AM or AWB's strong and robust construction made them durable and a number were converted to other workboat roles or became

pleasure craft after they were decommissioned. Prepared with assistance from The Register of Australian and New Zealand Boats, which carries a page on the 40 Ft Workboats http://www.boatregister.net/WW2_ArmyWorkBoats.html

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 12 m (39.37 ft)