

Basic Detail Report



Victoria II

Vessel number

HV000580

Date

1897

Primary Maker

Forrest and Sons UK

Description

VICTORIA II was designed to meet the standards of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and appears to follow closely the design of similar craft built in Australia such as the Port Fairy and Portland Lifeboats, HV000045 and HV000273. VICTORIA II was constructed in England by Forrest & Sons Yacht, Ship builders, Engineers, based at London and Wyvenhoe in England. It was made using double diagonal planking in mahogany with canvas between the two skins. It was self-righting and included a heavy two tonne cast iron keel, deck drains and a series of water-tight compartments. If capsized VICTORIA II could right in eleven seconds and completely drain of water after a further seventeen seconds. The craft also carried a mast and sails. A crew of 13 manned the boat. They were each paid one pound per month and for every call-out paid a further 25 shillings in ordinary weather or 50 shillings in bad weather. The coxswain was paid 4 pounds and second coxswain 2 pounds. They were each given a life insurance policy for 200 pounds. Although VICTORIA II was a state-of-the-art lifeboat for this period, when it arrived from the UK disappointed Newcastle citizens had expected it to be steam-powered. It was however a significant improvement on earlier rescue vessels. In 1869, a prominent Novocastrian claimed the Newcastle lifeboat service was "second to none in the world". This was despite the fact there was no boatshed and the then lifeboat was unseaworthy. VICTORIA II was involved in the dramatic rescue of the 32 men on board the stricken barque ADOLPHE at the entrance to Newcastle Harbour in September 1904. The late maritime historian Terry Callen said the heavily laden rescue boat carried a staggering 47 people to safety, including seamen, port pilot and the lifeboat's own crew of 14. The rescue finally stirred the NSW government into action to extend the northern (Stockton) breakwater and remove the shoal at Oyster Bank, the cause of so many accidents. VICTORIA II's final mission was the rescue of crewmen off a stricken ship outside Newcastle Harbour, during a gale on July 23, 1921. The lifeboat crew stood by the struggling steamer CENTURY in Stockton Bight, battling the ocean for 15 hours. Although the crew stayed on-call for many years after this event, the VICTORIA II never again went to sea and was retired about 1940, along with the Sydney lifeboat ALICE RAWSON at Watsons Bay. It is understood there had been at least seven port lifeboats beginning with the first in 1838, but the most famous were the VICTORIA I and VICTORIA II. Between 1859 and 1864, the Newcastle lifeboat service saved more than 70 lives, and another 45 lives between 1891 and 1896. From 1962 until 1979 VICTORIA II was a roadside attraction at Hexham, outside the famous Oak dairy factory where it was mounted on concrete in an open-sided shed. Before this it had

been stored in a city wool store and at the BHP Steelworks at Port Waratah. In 1979, VICTORIA II was handed over to the Newcastle Maritime Museum Society for display at the Fort Scratchley shed. Since 2007 VICTORIA II has been on display inside Honeysuckle's Newcastle Maritime Centre. It has been fully restored; the only original items missing are a bulkhead tomahawk and a knife, both once necessary to quickly sever rope lines in a threatening high sea.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 11.8 m x 2.7 m (38.72 ft x 8.86 ft)