

Basic Detail Report



Amber Lee

Vessel number

HV000236

Date

1920

Primary Maker

N & E Towns

Description

AMBER LEE (a name dating from 2008) was built by N & E Towns at their shed on Dempsey Island (now Kooragang Island) near Newcastle on the Hunter River, most probably in the 1920s. It is not known if it was used commercially or built solely as a recreational craft. The skiff is 6.1 metres long, of clinker construction using Australian beech planking, cedar floors, grown tea-tree knees and stem, and copper fastenings. There are two rowing thwarts and two pairs of rowlocks which were hardwood pegs, referred to as poppets by the builders. It has a mast for a small sail, which may originally have been a simple spritsail. The installation of an engine in a rowing skiff, a type that had existed for decades, is an interesting development. The hull has quite a wide, deep bilge which runs aft to the sternpost and is formed by the lower strakes of planking. This accommodates the propeller shaft and housing and creates additional volume to support the added machinery weight, something not needed on a craft with only oars or sculls for power. Traditional waterman skiffs and butcher boats would have a finer run aft for the lower strakes. Currently AMBER LEE has a Stuart Turner petrol motor installed; details of the original engine are not known. Towns is a well known name in rowing circles. The family patriarch, George Towns senior was a boatbuilder with eight children who lived on Dempsey Island in the Newcastle region. All were involved with boat building. The eldest son George became a champion sculler and builder of racing sculls and shells in Sydney. AMBER LEE however was built by the business started by the elder George, N & E Towns. It features the original copper nameplate of the boatbuilder. The firm was well known on the NSW Central Coast for its skiffs, launches, punts and surfboats. The current owner gave the unnamed craft the name AMBER LEE and in 2008 it was restored to retain almost all of its original material and structure. It is in operating condition.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 6.1 m x 5.79 m x 1.6 m x 0.3 m (20 ft x 19 ft x 5.25 ft x 1 ft)