

Basic Detail Report



Gippsland Indigenous Bark Canoe

Vessel number

HV000525

Date

1900

Description

The canoe is constructed from a single piece of stringy bark, the ends of which have been gathered and tied with a rope. There is string attached at lengths along the canoe to hold it together. It is recorded that the bark for this canoe was cut with a metal axe. This canoe is the typical type of canoe used in the Gippsland region of Victoria. The method of construction varied according to the type and qualities of the bark used to construct the canoe. In one instance the bark was placed over a fire and turned inside out, otherwise it was used as it had been cut from the tree and the ends were folded and tied with bark rope. In some instances the ends were plugged with clay if the bark was too thick to fold. A detailed record described how the bark was carefully peeled from a tree and the outer rough layer of bark then removed, leaving a light under layer of bark with a fibrous inner layer. The freshly peeled bark was then held over a fire in order to steam it and make it pliable. The bark was then turned inside out, edges folded over and the ends of the bark pleated and bound with a plant fibre rope such as stringy bark that is wrapped around each end. Gum was used to make the seams watertight. Clay was also used to plug up seams and any holes that appeared in the canoe. Long poles that were held in the middle were moved from side to side to guide the canoe along. When the canoe reached deep water the pole was exchanged for two 'scoop-shaped pieces of bark', about fifteen centimetres long were used as paddles. These scoops were also used to bail out the canoe when necessary. In Gippsland it was noted that when steering on rough water the canoes were piloted side on so that they would not break across the wave. No information has been recorded about who made the canoe and when it was made. This canoe was donated to the museum by A. C. Le Souef and registered in 1900 as X011202 in the collection.. Early collectors acquired objects such as these because it was believed at the time that Aboriginal people were 'a dying race'. This belief and the growing interest in ethnography created a strong trade in Aboriginal objects from the early 19th century onwards. Prepared from research by Museum Victoria.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 4.75 m x 0.67 m (15.58 ft x 2.2 ft)