

# Basic Detail Report

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## Kate

### Vessel number

HV000095

### Date

c 1913

### Primary Maker

Hector Bailey

### Description

KATE was built in 1913 by Hector Bailey, the son of waterman Alfred Bailey, who had operated a service between Abbotsford and Punt Road at Bedlam Point on the Parramatta River. Hector continued this service until KATE was bought by Thomas Halfacre in the early 1920s.

It remained with him until the mid 1970s when other family members assumed ownership. His niece, Joan Harris eventually donated the craft to the Sydney Heritage Fleet in 1998. The skiff was in excellent condition, thanks largely to Tom Halfacre who had always kept KATE undercover in his cellar, and washed the skiff down after every time it was taken out. He was very attached to the boat and some people even thought that a girl Kate was part of their family as he constantly referred to 'taking KATE out today'. KATE is built in the traditional clinker construction used for these craft. The six strakes on each side are New Zealand kauri, roved to each other and to the spotted gum frames. There are two risers along the topsides. The top riser runs full length and forms the base for the four kauri cross-thwarts. Between the second and third thwarts a side thwart is also fitted, and the third thwart aft has an elegant backboard for the passengers. There are floorboards fitted along the hull bottom. The rudder is fitted with a tiller, but it may also have had a yoke at the rudder head and lines for one of the passengers to steer with. Alfred Bailey was also a stonemason, and information provided in 2012 by the owner of an existing heritage house built by Bailey in 1882 indicates that he was a highly skilled tradesman. The construction of KATE suggests Hector, who was born in this house, worked with a similar level of skill and craftsmanship. The hull shape features a hollow entry, which then becomes gently rounded in section through the middle, and then runs out to a classic wine glass transom shape. The transom is planked down to the heel. It would have been an easy shape to row, even when fully laden. It is also believed that the waterman's skiff evolved into early versions of the 16 foot skiff class and other Sydney Harbour racing skiffs, the open boats that eventually became famous throughout the world. The waterman's skiff on Sydney Harbour followed a tradition believed to have begun on the Thames River in London. The oarsman charged a fee for carrying passengers and cargo from point to point around the waterways. In the early days of the colony's settlement and expansion, the waterman's skiff was the primary form of transport. One of the busiest crossings was between Gladesville and Drummoyne on the Parramatta River. The waterman's skiff

endured for over a hundred years, and KATE was still operating even when the steam ferry had become the dominant vessel for public transport on the harbour. KATE is now on display at WHARF 7 as part of the Sydney Heritage Fleet of small vessels.

### **Dimensions**

Vessel Dimensions: 4.88 m x 1.45 m (16 ft x 4.75 ft)