

# Basic Detail Report

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## Florrie

### Vessel number

HV000176

### Date

1880

### Primary Maker

Rock Davis

### Description

FLORRIE is one of the oldest surviving timber craft in Australia. It was launched in 1880 at Blackwall on Brisbane Waters NSW and was built by Rock Davis, one of the most respected builders of that region. FLORRIE is also a rare example of a vessel built by him and shows his construction methods for that period. The 20 metre long hull is carvel planked on sawn and grown frames, and most of the material used was local hardwood. FLORRIE was steam powered with twin British made engines giving a combined 15 hp, and had a deck house forward. Two masts forming a schooner rig gave it sail power as well. FLORRIE was built for the Casino storekeeper Frederick Crouch who operated the vessel as a mixed cargo steamer on the Richmond River. It was named after Crouch's daughter Florence. FLORRIE grounded on the bar of the Richmond in 1882. It was headed back to Casino with a load of cargo from ships anchored offshore. Crouch sold the damaged vessel to the Ballina pilot Captain Fenwick, who repaired the hull and replaced the two engines with a single 18 hp steam engine that had been made in 1876 by Jack Hilton of North Sydney. Fenwick operated FLORRIE for about 16 years as cargo and passenger steamer, before it passed from his estate to Charles Jacobsen in 1899, then later to Charles Dorrrough in 1902. It remained a workhorse on the Richmond River, carrying timber for the British Australian Timber Co and then Dalgety and Co. It appears to have been leased or used under permission by the Grant brothers from Woodburn, who used FLORRIE as a tug for towing punts. The last owner to operate FLORRIE was the Ballina Slipway. They replaced the steam engine with a diesel and used FLORRIE to tow the gravel dredge PASHA for their other business, the Lismore Sand and Gravel Co. In 1974 there were severe floods in Lismore and in one of the vessel's last journeys it carried 'hay, beer kegs and other vital necessities' to help the community recover from the natural disaster. FLORRIE was retired in 1975 and the diesel engine removed. There was significant community concern that the vessel could be broken up or scuttled. At the last minute several Ballina Municipal Councilors mounted a rescue effort and FLORRIE was saved. The craft was lifted from the river and set in a cradle on the river bank in Ballina. In 2006 it was moved a short distance to a new shed so that it was undercover and would form a significant display for the Ballina Naval and Maritime Museum. The original hull remained extant, but the superstructure which underwent changes over the vessel's operating life was removed and placed in storage. The elegant slender lines of the hull remain evident and show a typical shape used for riverboats so that they created as little wash and wake as possible, reducing damage to the riverbanks. FLORRIE remains as a key reference point for the early history of the area. The

Richmond River was a major trading route for Northern NSW and of the many vessels that once worked the Richmond and other rivers along the coast, FLORRIE may be one of less than a handful that have survived. It is now on display inside the Ballina Naval and Maritime Musuem, where it has been cut in half and people can access the view of the interior.

### **Dimensions**

Vessel Dimensions: 20.63 m x 4.02 m (67.7 ft x 13.2 ft)