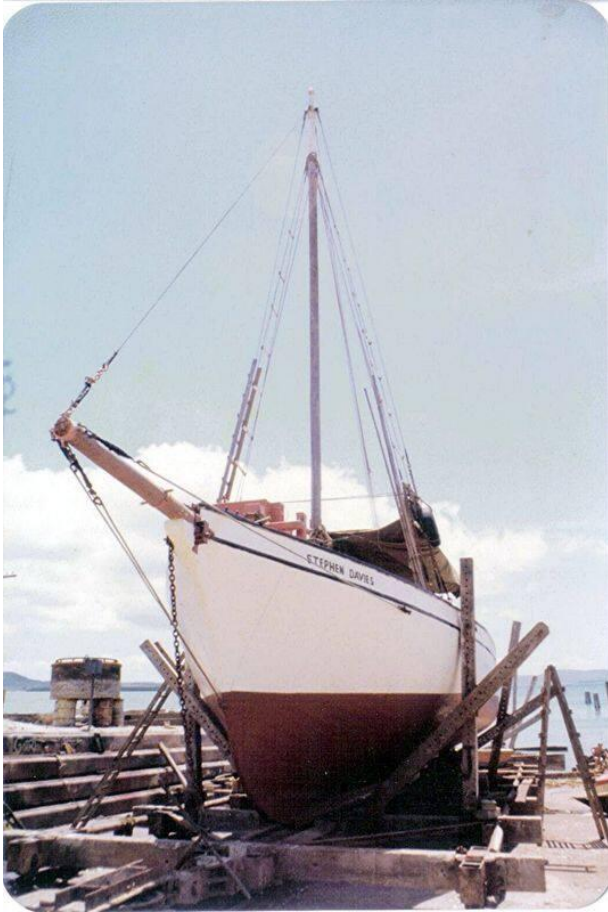


# Basic Detail Report

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## Stephen Davies

### Vessel number

HV000798

### Date

1952

### Primary Maker

Norman R Wright and Sons

### Description

The 59 foot long wooden hull of the STEPHEN DAVIES is carvel planked and built along similar lines to the traditional Torres Strait pearling lugger designs by Ron Wright that were also built by Norman R Wright and Sons. It is a very similar size and style to the 1950s pearling luggers ANTONIA and sister ship ANNIKI, but features a clipper bow instead of a rounded, spoon bow profile. It was rigged as a gaff ketch and powered by 105 hp Gardner 6L3 diesel engine, its primary means of power. It was named and dedicated in May 1951 at Bulimba, and

was operated under a St George Flag, manned by Torres Strait Islanders, as the Diocese of Carpentaria's mission vessel. The Courier-Mail 5 May 1951 carried the following report: "Set to sail for Mission. Ten Torres Strait islanders sang native hymns yesterday at the naming and dedication of the Australian Board of Mission launch Stephen Davies The launch is named after the Rt Rev Stephen Davies Bishop of Carpentaria for 25 years now living in retirement. Mrs Davies officially named the launch. The Rev. Kabay Pilot, a Torres Strait islander and an assistant priest of All Souls Cathedral, Thursday Island assisted Archbishop Halse in the dedication ceremony. A St George flag, a gift from the Comrades of St George was broken out at the masthead. This is the flag under which the launch will sail." The Queensland Times 22 May 1951 continues the story. "Fine ketch for Torres Strait. Townsville, May 21- Bound for Cairns and Thursday Island, one of the finest ketches seen in Townsville for some time left port this afternoon. She was the 59ft fully rigged Stephen Davies, the Diocese of Carpentaria Mission vessel. Built in Brisbane by Norman R Wright, the cost of the vessel was met by the Queensland Government. She is in charge of Canon MA Warren, secretary of the Australian Board of Missions. He is acting engineer on the voyage. Other crewmembers are Mr John Downton, chief officer and navigator, Mr RR Gibson (PMG Department) and Mr Geoff Goodby. After delivery to Thursday Island the Stephen Davies will be manned by Torres Strait Islanders." Although sharing a lot of the configuration and construction of its close sisters the pearling luggers, STEPHEN DAVIES was designed as a cargo boat. Instead of the holds and deck being filled by shell it was filled with all manner of supplies and hardware from Thursday Island for the Anglican run missions

on Cape York and was registered to carry 25 tonnes of cargo. When the Cape York missions were taken over by the Queensland state government the MV STEPHEN DAVIES was included in their inventory and remained in use. Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs (DAIA) trucks would deliver supplies for building, medical aid posts etc to the wharf where they were loaded onto the boat. The Island Industries Board (IIB) would arrange for food to be loaded. STEPHEN DAVIES became an iconic vessel to the Torres Strait Islander community. It visited all the islands and everyone felt a connection to it. The vessel created a strong impression on many and they share vivid recollections of its long service to the region. After years of this trade and support to the Indigenous communities, it moved into private ownership in 1984, owned by Ray Cousins, then Steven Thornally from the late 1980s until early 2000s, when Mike Rawlings became the owner. In 2019 it became part of the Pearl Luggie Heritage Fleet in Cairns. STEPHEN DAVIES is now looking toward the future. The Heritage Fleet are currently working towards gaining AMSA survey in 1E to operate STEPHEN DAVIES as a voyaging museum display and educational platform based in Cairns. The next goal after that is for 1D and 2C extended Cape York voyages, back in home waters again. Meanwhile the following song and translation were passed onto the pearling Heritage Fleet recently, it is by Torres Strait Islander George Passi and is from 1967. Yagar, keriba nar, S.T.E.P.H.E.N Davies; S.T.E.P.H.E.N. Davies, Ma pe nagadim ma ekerdali, e? Rolls Royce-ide mari namarikli, e, G. of Carpentaria gur-ge ma eli, Sager pe kebikebi kelarkelar bamridari, e, Ma pe mabi, ma pe mabi wamen-ge ber-ge susu dikri, e, Yagar, keriba nar, S.T.E.P.H.E.N. Davies. Translation- Oh, our boat, S.T.E.P.H.E.N. Davies, Where are you travelling to so fast? The Rolls Royce (engine) is driving you; You are wading in the sea of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The South-East wind flows a little bit stronger. By your speed you splash the seas with your sides; Oh, our boat, S.T.E.P.H.E.N. Davies. In this song the composer is talking to the boat he is travelling aboard as if it is to another person - a typical Islander reaction showing the relationship between man and his or his group's possession. The boat was owned by a government department, and the composer was an employee serving under the same department. In the song he is telling the impression the boat, driven by a powerful Rolls Royce engine, made on him when it ploughs through the waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria to its destination Thursday Island. The phrase he uses "Gur-ge ma eli" or "you are wading in the sea" means travelling at great speed and covering long distances.

### **Dimensions**

Vessel Dimensions: 20.73 m (68 ft)