

Basic Detail Report



SS Karatta lifeboat

Vessel number

HV000595

Date

c1907

Description

The lifeboat is around 6 metres long, has a double-ended hull shape and is clinker built with 12 narrow strakes. Throughout midships the top three strakes have a doubler section added beneath each strake as a sacrificial chaffing batten to protect the lower edge of the top strakes where the vessel would lay against the ship's hull or a wharf. Rowlock blocks are fitted for two rowing positions, but the thwarts have been removed. It would have probably been an open boat with no decking apart from a small area at the bow and stern. One of the lifting hooks that held the craft in the SS KARATTA's davits remains attached to the hull. As well as serving as the ship's lifeboat in case of an emergency, it had practical use as well. John Nordlund served aboard SS KARATTA from 1911 until 1921, and recalls using the lifeboats to ferry passengers ashore when the weather was too rough to tie up at Penneshaw Wharf on Kangaroo Island. Its use as a fishing boat is not documented, but it can be assumed that it was retained from the yard where the SS KARATTA was broken up, and a private owner acquired the craft. Its subsequent use involved fishing and other recreational activities. The adaptation to fishing purposes is shown by the addition of engine bearers for an engine, and a raised area of decking at the stem forming a covered over forepeak area. The hull is now stored ashore at the Penneshaw Folk and Maritime Museum on Kangaroo Island where a conservation plan including new cradles and support are being considered, so that the craft can be used as a focus point to tell the story of SS KARATTA's decades of service supporting the development of Kangaroo Island. The SS KARATTA was built in Greenock, UK by G Brown and Co and serviced Kangaroo Island for fifty-three years until its sale and breaking up in 1961. SS KARATTA was the lifeline to the mainland for residents and visitors, and was central to the development of the island's economy. It carried both freight and passengers and was vital for the health and well-being of residents who required transport to the mainland's medical services as these services were not available on the island.