



Whitsunday Island Aboriginal Bark Canoe

Vessel number

HV000038

Date

c 1900

Description

This Indigenous three-piece bark canoe is made in 3 panels with a bottom and two sides. The panels of bark

are flat, and stitched to each other. The top edge of the side panels has a branch of timber lashed to the edge, and the joint between the panels also has a branch on the inside, held together with lashing or stitching. These branches stiffen the structure, and the joints between the three panels are caulked to make them watertight. There is one internal frame at the middle of the hull, and it is also made from a branch. The panels all taper to a point at either end, and in profile the bottom panel curves upwards and the top edge curves downwards toward both ends. There is an interesting repair to a small split in one side panel, where it is pulled together with fibre lashing that is bound around a small reinforcing stick on the inside surface. It also appears to have had the inside surfaces treated with fire to remove loose material. There are no records showing when this craft was built, but it was collected around 1900 and so is assumed to come from that time as well. The type was used in open waters between the islands in the Whitsunday Island Group off the northern Queensland coast. This use in potentially choppy water is helped by the relatively high freeboard of the side panels when compared with other Indigenous bark canoes. As well as being used for fishing activities, the craft enabled the Indigenous people to maintain inter-island contact.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 2.58 m x 0.53 m (8.45 ft x 1.75 ft)