

Basic Detail Report



Indigenous Sewn Bark Canoe E011617 from Northern Territory

Vessel number

HV000587

Date

1903

Description

The canoe is 3.04m long and 475mm wide. It is made from the bark taken from *Eucalyptus tetrodonta* and along with woollybutt (*E. miniata*), these two trees are the most widespread tree species in northern tropical woodlands. They occur widely over Cape York Peninsula, Arnhem Land and the Kimberley regions. *Eucalyptus tetrodonta* is often called the Darwin stringybark and it can grow to 30m. It is widely used for indigenous bark canoe construction throughout northern Queensland and Arnhem Land. The craft has a crescent shaped bow profile, sewn together at the cut edge with a vine, probably split lengths of lawyer cane as used on other craft that have been documented. The sewing is extremely even, and repeated at the stern. However the profile of the stern is vertical, which contrasts with other documented craft such as HV000515 and HV000516 which have a similar crescent shape at each end. The gunwales have supporting branches lashed to the bark, and there are a small number of frames on the inside, secured at the top ends between the bark and the gunwale branch. The bark has been inverted so that the inner surface next to the sapwood of the tree has been used to advantage making a smoother, outside surface on the canoe, leaving the rougher exterior bark surface on the inside. This surface is cleaned of loose material. These type of craft were either used on river estuaries for fishing and also for short passages along the coast or out to islands just offshore. The canoe was probably capable of carrying two people, and paddled using hand held, small bark paddle blades. The craft is referenced as being acquired from Port Darwin in 1903. This is now known as Darwin, and while the canoe may have been built in or close to Port Darwin, it is more likely that this association is only a connection to the area it was shipped from, and it could have been built in a community and location along the coast well away from Darwin. The canoe is currently stored at the Australian Museum as part of their extensive collection of Indigenous watercraft.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 3.05 m x 0.5 m (10 ft x 1.65 ft)