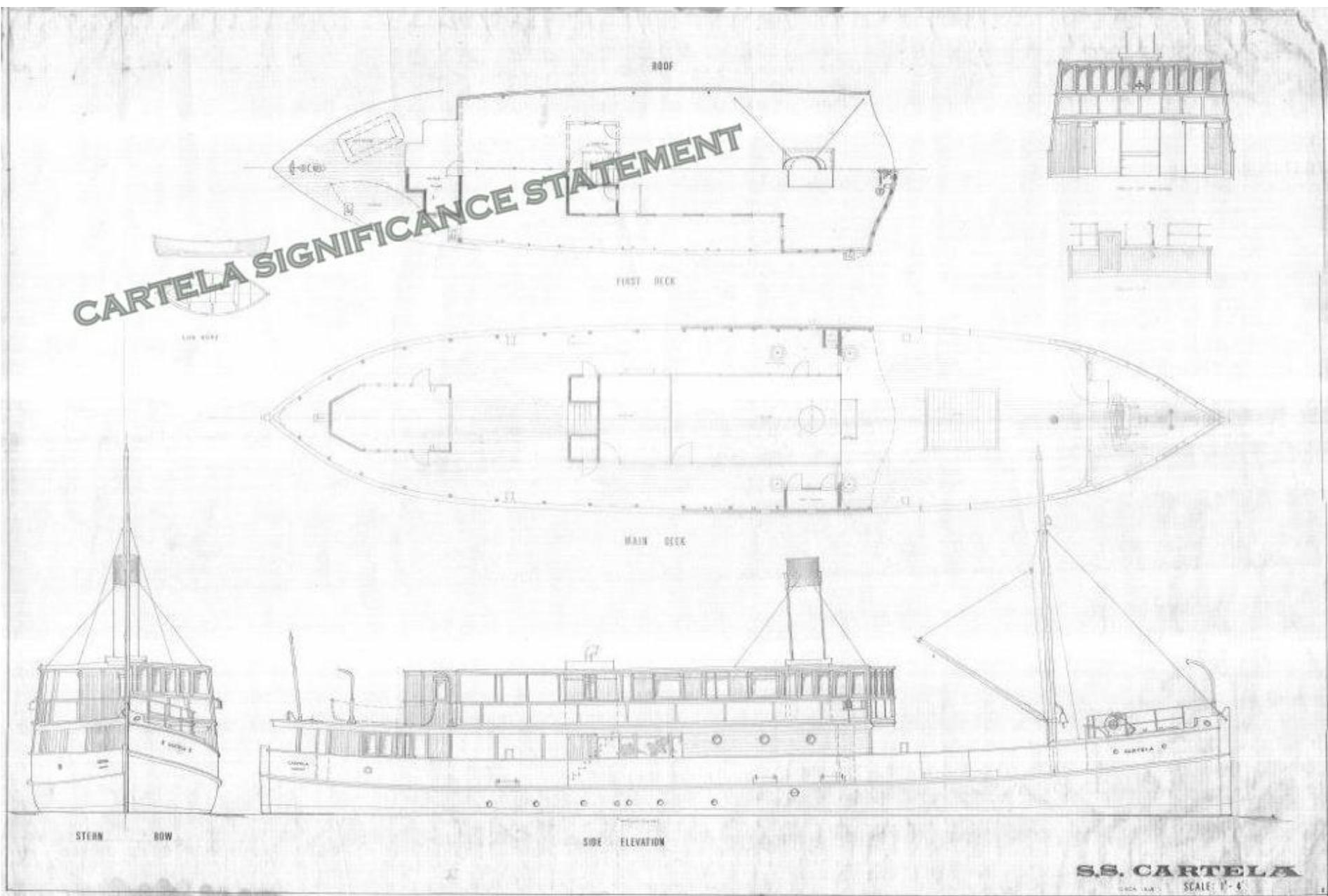


CARTELA SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT



S.S. CARTELA
SCALE: 1" = 6'

Cartela Significance Statement – 2011 MAPPS Grant

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Significance statement

The last known remaining Tasmanian river steamer, *Cartela* meets 8 out of a possible 8 *Significance 2.0* criteria. Playing an essential role in serving remote coastal and Hobartian communities and agriculture, *Cartela* also played a role in WWI as a patrol boat for the Derwent estuary and assisted the growing tourism industry. Built by an iconic Hobart shipbuilding company, *Cartela* was regarded as the finest and fastest river steamer of her class and era in Tasmania, and she can be used for research to illustrate local shipbuilding and design techniques. As a working vessel she has strong ties to the local community, with many people remembering excursions on *Cartela* fondly. Whilst having been in survey for 99 years, she is also comparatively unchanged and intact, beyond a change of engine, and is in good condition for a vessel of her age. *Cartela's* provenance can be traced from first concepts to her current owners. As an operational vessel, *Cartela* can be used to interpret not only river steamers and wooden shipbuilding traditions in southern Tasmania, but also our water-ways and coastal communities.

Historic Significance

Cartela was built for Huon, Channel & Peninsula Steamship Co. Ltd. by well-known Battery Point shipbuilders Purdon & Featherstone in 1912, to service communities along the estuary of the Derwent River, D'Entrecasteaux Channel and Tasman Peninsula at a time when the best access was by sea. A vessel like *Cartela* was often a remote community's main point of contact with the rest of the world and the river steamer's whistle was a signal for locals to meet the vessel at the wharf. [GW Cox, p. 1]

As a fast, versatile vessel for her era, *Cartela* played an important role in rescuing a seriously injured man from Tasman Island for medical treatment after a crane collapsed in 1927, racing 44 miles in 3 hours 20 minutes. [*The Mercury*, 14/03/1927] Her races with rival steamer *Togo* from Hobart to Green Island on Christmas Day were passionately followed by the local community from 1913 until 1930, with hundreds of passengers boarding the vessels and cheering them on, and others driving down the Channel to watch their progress. [GW Cox, p. 59] As a locally made vessel, *Cartela* and the other Purdon & Featherstone steamers also arguably helped maintain a sense of local pride in Hobart's shipbuilding industry at a time when larger vessels were increasingly made inter-state or overseas.

River ferries like *Cartela* were integral to the economies of isolated rural communities along the south east Tasmanian coast, carrying passengers and general freight, and fruit, timber and butter and eggs for sale at the Hobart markets. *Cartela* was also used to break the 1919 maritime strike, transporting

4000 apple cases from Port Huon to Port Melbourne and returning with a load of general merchandise. [G W Cox, p. 58] Her role as a cargo vessel only ended in the 1950s when trucks began to take over from the ketches and river ferries.

As suggested previously, *Cartela* played a very important and surprising sporting role over a period of 17 years in southern Tasmania, taking part in the legendary ferry races of Christmas Day from Hobart to Green Island. As GW Cox wrote:

'...the operators did not advertise that a race would be held. Instead 'the fastest trip on the river' was promised, or 'forty miles of beautiful scenery at express speed'. The fact that the ships departed from Hobart wharves within seconds of each other was merely a coincidence. Officially there was no race; therefore there was no flag-fall, nor gun nor anything that might lead to the slightest suspicion that it was the start of one.' [GW Cox, p. 69]

These unofficial races were a point of pride among the river ferry crews and owners, and up to 600 passengers might cheer *Cartela* on down the river. *Cartela* was designed to be the fastest of her class. She took line honours in the annual race to Green Island 12 times and recorded the fastest time. *Cartela* still proudly carries her golden 'cock of the river' on her mast as a reminder of her success.

As an excursion ferry, *Cartela* also made an important contribution to the budding tourism industry in early 20th century Tasmania. *Cartela's* trips to places like Eaglehawk Neck were not only enjoyed by locals, but also by interstate tourists. [*The Mercury*, 29/12/1916] Although there are now no other of her sister steamers to race with, *Cartela* continues to contribute to the local tourist economy as an excursion vessel.

As with many vessels *Cartela* played her part in WWI, as a patrol boat for the Derwent. It was at this time that she successfully rescued the 2,307 ton four masted barque *Invernesshire*, towing the damaged vessel through rough seas although *Invernesshire* was 10 times her size. [GW Cox, pp. 57-58]

Artistic or aesthetic significance

Cartela was designed and built by iconic Hobart shipbuilders Purdon & Featherstone in 1912. Earlier vessels like *Togo* set a high standard in speed, elegance and efficiency, and *Cartela* was designed to compete at this higher standard and cater to passengers in comfort as well as haul cargo. At her launch she was praised for her elegant lines and has remained a favourite of Tasmanians for 99 years. To be able to remain in operation without substantial change for 99 years underscores the solidity of her original design and construction.

When she was launched, *Cartela* had a dining saloon, smoking saloon and ladies cabin, and 'every convenience for both sexes.' She had 'brilliant' electric light and flushing lavatories – but also room in the hold for 3,000 bushels of apples. [*The Mercury* 11/01/1913] The river steamers' dual role as cargo and passenger vessels arguably led to a distinctive profile and hull shape.

Cartela was designed to be the fastest ferry on the river, in direct competition with *Togo*. She had powerful triple expansion engines, and a large capacity boiler that allowed her to maintain high levels of pressure over a long period. Like the ketch *May Queen*, *Cartela* survived partially because she was known to be the best example of her kind. She represented the pinnacle of wooden hulled steamship building in Tasmania during the early 20th century.

Scientific or research potential

Having remained in continuous commercial use for 99 years *Cartela* tells a number of unique stories. One is of the durability of the design and construction methods used in 1912. The second is the suitability of this design to evolutionary and adaptive technologies that have kept her in service over such a remarkably long period. Appropriate sympathetic modifications have kept pace with enforced legislative requirements, keeping her appearance substantially unchanged over a century of use. Much of the shipbuilding techniques of the time of her launch can still be seen in her fabric today such as original hull fastenings and double sawn frames, while essential safety improvements such as collision bulkheads and steel decks have not intruded on her appearance.

At the time of *Cartela's* construction, river steamer *Excella* was also being built on an adjacent slip. *Excella* was launched with 'semi-diesel' engines: one of the first using this technology. In this respect *Cartela* displays the high point of both Steam power and wooden construction.

Social/spiritual significance

Nearly everyone in Hobart and nearby waterways will have a memory of *Cartela*. Many locals still remember excursions on *Cartela* to places like Bruny Island in the 1950s-60s. Additionally the communities at Shipwrights Point, Nubeena, Dover, New Norfolk, Browns River and a host of others relied on the steamers to provide the connection and sense of occasion for their regattas – a high point on the social lives of the estuary and coastal communities each year.

Comparative Criteria

Provenance

Ownership and operation of *Cartela* has been well documented, from her launch until the present day. The commissioning owners, the Huon, Channel and Peninsula Steamship Co. Ltd. operated her until the early 1950's. She passed to the ownership of a Mr McLean who owned her for less than a year before she was purchased by the current owners, Roche Bros., who have operated her for the past 60 years. Under this ownership her steam equipment was replaced with diesel and other limited modifications to her structure were made.

There is a well-established archive of photographic and documentary material preserved on this vessel from the day she was conceived in board meetings of the Huon, Channel and Peninsula Steamship Co. Ltd to the present day. Extensive records of the operation of the vessel are held in archives by her operators. She has operated from Brooke Street Pier for her entire life.

Rarity or representativeness

Cartela is the last remaining of the 50 to 70 original Tasmanian timber river steamers in survey and one of the oldest coastal/river steamers in Australia. She is one of the oldest continually registered vessels in the world with no break in service for 99 years. There are no other vessels of her type currently existing with potential for restoration, with the possible exception of *Reemere* - currently thought to be in Vanuatu.

As the pinnacle of early 20th century Tasmanian river steamers, and yet the last remaining, *Cartela* is both rare and representative of her class.

Condition

As *Cartela* is in current survey as a passenger carrying vessel she is in good condition, and represents the best possible platform for a restoration to her original specification. Apart from her engine, only limited modifications have been made to her over the years, so it can be said that she is as near complete as possible. The owners have access to the original steam engine and other essential equipment necessary for restoration.

Interpretive capacity

As an operational 'living' vessel, *Cartela* can be used to interpret the river steamers and Hobart shipwrights, but also through offering similar excursion experiences to those offered 50 to 80 years ago to local, interstate and international visitors, *Cartela* also provides a way for people to experience the water-ways of southern Tasmania.