

Basic Detail Report

00036462

Title

Hegarty's Ferries

Date

before 2003

Medium

Metal

Dimensions

Overall: 20 x 20 mm, 2 mm, 0.004 kg

Name

Ferry token

History

Hegarty's Ferries were almost an anachronism when they closed early in January 2003. They served a short run from Circular Quay to the smaller wharves about the inner harbour: Mc Mahons Point, Lavender Bay, Jeffrey Street, Kirribilli and Beulah Street. Except for McMahons Point wharf, all the wharves they served are too small to be visited by the larger ferries operated by State Transit. The fleet comprised three small wooden ferries, the EMERALD STAR, TWIN STAR and the LEURA. They were painted a jaunty blue and white outside. Inside the passenger compartment they had varnished wooden bench seats around the sides. The stern portion of the passenger compartment was roofed but open. Hegarty's was established in 1908 by Ned and Evelyn Hegarty. Their children Thomas, Leonard, Estelle and Ettalong later came into the business. All their ferries had the second name Star in recognition of their family firm, the Star Insurance Company. By 1920 they had four ferries running, and they included Luna Park on their routes. By 1945 they had eight ferries and their own slipway and work shop at Drummoyne. At their peak they operated at ten minute intervals with a capacity of 3,000 seats and 28,000 passengers a day. In 1948 Hegarty's sold the business to two women, Mrs Barber and Miss Porter, who conducted it until 1965. During this time Hegarty's enjoyed a virtual monopoly of Luna Park traffic, when the larger ferry companies gave up the Luna Park service. JC Needham, a retired naval officer, was the next owner, until Stannard Brothers bought the company in 1980. The final owner, Captain Cook Cruises, bought Hegarty's and its three ferries in 1987. During this period Hegarty's was sole operator of the service to Luna Park and McMahons Point, and also had exclusive operation of tours to Fort Denison. They provided school services and charters as well. But by 2000 the company was in decline. Luna Park had closed, State Transit had taken over the Fort Denison tours, and there was government fare control. Captain Cook Cruises had to subsidise the operation. Until this time Captain Cook Cruises had sole occupancy at No 6 Jetty, Circular Quay, but the wharf was opened up to other companies and Captain Cook Cruises closed Hegarty's on 7 January 2003. The ferries were put up for sale. The EMERALD STAR was listed with the National Trust of Australia (New

South Wales) in May 2002 and included in its Register. It was built by Ned Hegarty in 1945 when he bought the hull of a partly built 17 meter fishing trawler and completed the ferry at his own boatyard in Drummoyne. The TWIN STAR was commissioned by JC Needham in 1973. LEURA was acquired by Stannard Brothers. Hegartys survived well beyond their time, patronised by a small but loyal following who preferred their old fashioned scale to the large State Transit Ferries, and who lived close to the small wharves dotted around the inner lower North Shore. For two years before the company's demise, handmade posters campaigning to save Hegartys were put up at the wharves they served, and petitions were taken at Circular Quay and other places. The last ferry, scheduled to leave Circular Quay at 6pm on 7 January 2003, went back and forth with a partying crowd for more than two hours, making occasional stops back at the Quay to take on more refreshments. The coin-operated turnstiles were already outdated, superseded by the electronic gates needed for the peak hour crowds on the main services at Circular Quay.