

# Basic Detail Report

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## Questing

**Vessel number**

HV000688

**Date**

1949

**Primary Maker**

Andrew Riddell

## Description

QUESTING is carvel planked and splined in Oregon on spotted gum frames. The 10.66m long yacht was built by shipwright Andy Riddell during 1949 at an interesting site, out in the open and on the shoreline of either Fisher Bay or Sandy Bay in Seaforth opposite The Spit in Middle Harbour. The yacht was  $\frac{3}{4}$  rigged with a tall wooden spar. This was the very early period of Alan Payne's long design career which later produced the International Class 12 metres GRETEL (HV000471) and GRETEL II (HV000437), the Tasman Seabird class and numerous other yachts for ocean racing and cruising. Most of these yachts had the classic profile with a curved sheer and long overhangs, and QUESTING appears to be the first yacht of his design built with those elements. Payne began his private practice designing yachts and other craft in late 1945, and the first couple of yachts designs including THURLOO (HV000043), THARA (HV000549) and NOCTURNE ( see sister ship SERENADE HV000260) had short overhangs and a raised sheer. Although two of the yachts were intended to race with Sydney Amateur Sailing Club on Sydney Harbour (which had a length overall limit of 35 feet), they were also meant to go cruising. The owner of QUESTING, Dr Ashleigh Davy, of Woollahra, also wanted to race with SASC, however Payne was able to develop a different style of yacht, and even before it was launched it quickly came to the attention of Seacraft magazine where it was featured in an October 1949 issue article. QUESTING was described in the opening lines as a 'racy sloop'. The magazine went directly to Payne for comments: "When he showed us the plans, we commented on the fact that accommodation seemed rather limited for a 35-footer—and immediately discovered that Payne holds very strong views on the subject of "room below." Though these views may run contrary to the fashion of the moment, Payne was able to back them up with sound arguments, so we told him to let his head go and set them down on paper. Reading Payne's arguments, do not be misled into thinking he is generally opposed to roomy shortened craft; he believes they have their place—but that place is on the open sea, not on sheltered harbor waters, to which most yacht owners restrict their activities. DESIGNER'S VIEWS When I was asked to write a few words about this design, I thought at first that I would content myself with saying the boat was more or less what the owner wanted. But I find myself taking a risk and suggesting that this boat would suit many other yachtsmen, even though it may not appeal to them at first sight. I have shown the drawings to a number of yachtsmen. Some said they thought it was not bad of its kind, but that their own preference would be for more room inside. I feel they are on the wrong track. Nine times out of ten their boats are taken out for day or afternoon sailing in sheltered waters. To enjoy this to

the full we need a yacht with a comfortable, roomy cockpit, with somewhere below decks to brew a cup of tea and do a little elementary cooking, and (an important item this) with a satisfactory w.c. installation. Lastly, the yacht should be a pleasure to sail. Now, this is certainly the most important requirement. With a boat that is fast, responsive to the helm and easy to work, a day out will always be a pleasure, whether the winds be light or strong, whether the sun shines or not. At least that's how it seems to me. But many people don't seem to consider these requirements. I am surprised at those who buy heavy cruising yachts and then use them mostly for day trips to and from some lunch-time rendezvous. What use to them is full headroom or bunks for droves of people, lots of fancy fittings below decks, or rows of masts and sails instead of a single sloop rig? The usual answer is that people put up with these slowcoaches because one day they mean to make an extended cruise. But how many of them actually get around to making that cruise? One in fifty, perhaps." He finished by saying: "I hope she will turn out a little more graceful than some recent designs around her size. The tendency nowadays seems to be not so much to produce a good-looking boat, but rather to pile on as much height of topsides and cabin house as the design can possibly stand." QUESTING fulfilled the designer's intentions and was admired by many. The hull looks like a classic International Class 6 Metre design, but it has slightly greater breadth and is finished with a low cabin top. With this combination it also shares characteristics of the International One Design class from the mid-1930s, but it is not known if this was a strong influence in the design. Dr Davy raced QUESTING with SASC for a number of years where it was quite successful in club racing and special trophy events. He sold the yacht to Grant Crichton in 1955 and it continued to race with the club. It was also taken off the British Ships Register at this time but remained in the Sydney and Pittwater area. It is understood that one time yacht broker and boat builder George Mottle tried to sail it to Lord Howe Island, but bad weather forced it back after a few days. Other owners included Rod Smith and Graeme Evans. In 1983 Alan Payne's brother Bill Payne bought QUESTING from journalist Robert Gordon, and kept it on the same mooring in Shell Cove on Sydney Harbour. At this stage it was in good condition but had an old aluminium spar and masthead sloop rig. In 1986 he had the cockpit rebuilt, a new Yanmar engine put in and a new, easily managed 7/8ths fractional rig installed which was designed by Bill's son, David Payne. The yacht was sailed extensively on Sydney Harbour by all members of the Payne family and took part in some of the classic yacht races as well as day sailing and overnight cruising, just as it had been originally designed for. It stayed with the Payne family for just over 30 years. In early 2015 it was sold to new owners, and underwent a major overhaul and restoration with Simon Sadubin and Tom Coventry at Sydney Wooden Boats. A new planked deck, cockpit and cabin house went onto the hull which was repaired where required. The cabin house was slightly raised to improve headroom and a new fractional rig sail plan similar to the original height was installed. The plans for this work have been drawn up in consultation with SWB by David Payne, keeping the Payne connection with QUESTING going. It was sailing again in 2016, and was coming up to its 60th birthday. QUESTING was design number 23, and its classic style was repeated by Alan Payne immediately after when he designed both MOONYA (No 24) and its close sister yacht MARGARET M (KARALEE HV000293). They were larger ocean going yachts with much more room for accommodation, and their classic style led to further commissions and paved the way for his career through the 1950s with highlights such as the Tasman Seabirds, (CHERANA HV000428) and the design for GRETEL.

## Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 10.67 m × 7.01 m × 2.3 m × 1.75 m, 4.17 tonnes, 41.8 m<sup>2</sup> (35 ft × 23 ft × 7.55 ft × 5.75 ft, 4.1 tons, 450 ft<sup>2</sup>)