

Basic Detail Report



Pritchard Folding Boat

Vessel number

HV000067

Date

c 1920

Primary Maker

Pritchard Bros

Description

The Pritchard folding boat is a rare example of 1920s ingenuity. The builders, Pritchard Bros. created a sailing dinghy that can be dismantled and folded down for ease of storage and transport. These craft had a wide range of uses. The unusual craft comes from the period between the two world wars. The boatbuilding firm of Pritchard Bros. in North Sydney, well known for their speedy motor launches, patented a form of folding boat that used canvas joints. After the internal cross thwarts were removed, the hull folded down to a stack of relatively flat panels 4.4 metres long by about 750 mm width. The

advantages of the folding boat were primarily storage and transport. It could be stowed below decks aboard a much larger boat rather than taking up space on deck or requiring davits. The compromise was that the hull shape had to be developed around a series of relatively flat panels, so instead of a typical sharp stem and rounded hull sections, the craft were snub bowed and featured a veed chine hull section. It was not graceful, but it was practical, and all the essential features of a small sailing dinghy were incorporated in a clever piece of design. Another use promoted by the makers was as a flood relief boat for inland areas. Here was a simple craft that could be stored in a shed without taking up a lot of space and ready for its occasional use when floods happened every couple of years. It could be easily transported on a car as well, taking advantage of the increased availability and use of motor vehicles in both the city and country. It is also noted that the craft had a military application, and folding boats were trialed by the army, navy and air forces as commando or rescue craft that were easily stored aboard other vessels or aircraft. This example is believed to date from the 1920s. It was used by a Sydney scout group for many years before it was donated to the Sydney Heritage Fleet. Minimal work was required to bring the craft back to an excellent original condition, and in 2006 it is on display with the Sydney Heritage Fleet's collection at Wharf 7, Darling Harbour.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 4.36 m x 1.07 m (14.3 ft x 3.5 ft)