

# Basic Detail Report

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## PV Richmond

**Vessel number**

HV000797

**Date**

1932

### Primary Maker

W Holmes Boat Builder

### Description

The 10.4 m long pilot vessel was built from professionally drawn plans by Robert Westhorpe, Chief Shipwright's Surveyor, Navigation Department NSW Government in 1931 and is an English lifeboat style of hull. This is a very good style of hull form for the conditions it would encounter in its operational capacity. It has a double-ended hull shape, with a rounded bow profile at the stem piece and a longer rounded canoe-stern profile. It was also self-righting, having a tonne of lead as ballast on the keel, and with the ability to close all compartments including the central and open helm station as this had fold down screens that secured the otherwise open well. PV Richmond was constructed by W.L. Holmes of McMahons Point, Sydney in 1932, a well-known builder who had constructed many power craft since they were first introduced to Sydney Harbour in the early 1900s. The plans were drawn professionally by Robert Westhorpe, Chief Shipwright's Surveyor, Navigation Department NSW Government and it is understood other similar craft were intended to be built for pilot service along the coast. They are termed Motor Boat for Bar Harbours on the plans drawn by Robert Westhorpe. Reports from the period indicate that up to eight were being built by Government contractors, which could mean both government dockyard facilities and private builders such as Holmes who had tendered to build one or more were employed, so that they could all be put in to service quickly. The NSW coast had many rivers with bar crossings and commercial activities that required a safe passage on a regular basis. PV Richmond was commissioned into the then NSW Pilotage Service in May 1932, to replace an earlier open 'whale boat' style of vessel that had served the Port since 1927. Although based on the Richmond River, it was registered in Sydney. It was initially powered by a petrol engine. Australian Motor Boat and Yachting Monthly, April 5 and then later May 10 1932, noted its construction was well advanced and delivery was anticipated in May, and later included an image of it undergoing trials. Both the Northern Star in Lismore (5 May) and the Daily Examiner in Grafton (7 May) reported its arrival in Ballina in early May 1932. From the Northern Star: PILOT BOAT BUFFETED SYDNEY-BALLINA TRIP BALLINA, Wednesday. After a severe buffeting by a heavy sea, the waves breaking over the decks, and being driven to shelter at Byron Bay by a gale, the 36ft. motor lifeboat Richmond arrived from Sydney at 3.45 p.m. to-day with Captain Lyttle (pilot of Ballina) and Mr. Jack Busch (boat-man., The motor life-boat Richmond, one of three built for service on pilot stations along the coast, was taken charge of by Capt. Lyttle in Sydney last Thurs day, and a start made for the Richmond River. Boatman Jack Busch was the pilot's assistant, and with Mr. Holmes, who built the hull, and Capt. Sangster

(Superintendent of Navigation), as passengers. Port Macquarie was reached early on Friday morning. Here Mr. Holmes decided to return to Sydney. TRYING NIGHT TRAVEL Passing Newcastle, heavy weather from the south was encountered, and that night travel was most trying. A full cargo of fuel was taken aboard at the port, the intention being to make a non-stop trip to the Richmond Heads. Meeting a gale north of Smoky Cape with high seas buffeting it, the small craft was turned into Coff's Harbour on Saturday night. PASSED RICHMOND At 6.30 a.m. on Sunday a start was made for the Richmond. The gale continued. They arrived at the Richmond Heads at 5.30p.m. The pilot recognised that the bar was too dangerous to attempt in the failing light, and decided to go to Byron Bay. The sea continued rough until Wednesday, afternoon at 1 p.m. it was decided to make for Ballina. The boat crossed the bar at 3.45 p.m. SPLENDIDLY EQUIPPED Capt. Lyttle speaks very highly of the motor life-boat, and considers that she would be capable of standing almost any kind of sea. The Richmond is splendidly built with well-fitted cabins and good accommodation. She is thirty-six feet long, has a 9ft. 3in. beam, drawing 3ft. of water forward and 4ft. aft, and carries 1 1/4 tons of lead on the keel for ballast. She is most buoyant in the water and very sensitive to the helm. COST £1350 The engine was built at the Acme engineering works, Newcastle, of 25 horse power, and having three cylinders. The Richmond was designed by the chief shipwrights surveyor ( Mr Westhorpe) of the Navigation Department, and cost £1350. The actual travelling time from Sydney to Byron Bay was hours," averaging eight knots. In PV Richmond's first year in Ballina, 130 ships and boats visited the port. During its service the vessel was engaged with pilotage service duties, sounding the bar to check its depth and the channel's location, and helping in marine rescue operations. When the Pilotage Service was absorbed into the then Maritime Services Board (MSB), the MSB took over PV Richmond on 1 February 1936, and it continued with its varied duties. It was fitted with a diesel engine around the early 1950s. In 1973 it was one of the two vessels that guided the two La Balsa rafts into Port of Ballina after their voyage from South America. A composite of these two rafts is currently on display in the Ballina Naval & Maritime Museum. The vessel served the MSB until its retirement on 11th December 1981. The MSB then donated the vessel to the people of Ballina Shire at a ceremony on 23rd March 1982. A commemorative plaque had been set in stone understood to have been ballast on a much earlier vessel in the region is adjacent to the vessel. The same year, the Pilot's Cottage was donated to Ballina Shire and opened as a maritime museum in 1983. The Pilot's cottage was demolished in 1992, leaving PV Richmond as the link to the significant history of Pilot services in Ballina. A detailed report on the PV Richmond was completed by RPS (Significance Assessment PV Richmond. Ballina Naval & Maritime Museum, Ballina NSW, October 2012). This report states that PV Richmond is of "high local significance to the people of Ballina Shire". The report continues that the, "vessel has considerable technical/aesthetic significance, not only for its inherent character but is a tangible example of past craftsmanship. It (PV Richmond) may provide important insights into the lives of those who lived, worked, defended and protected our seas. As such, PV Richmond is considered to have high research value".

## **Dimensions**

Vessel Dimensions: 10.4 m × 1.52 m (34.12 ft × 4.99 ft)