

Basic Detail Report



Frances

Vessel number

HV000622

Date

1948

Description

FRANCES was designed by Ernest Digby who was a well-known yacht builder and designer based in Williamstown on Port Phillip. The 15.54 m (51 foot) carvel planked hull was planked in New Zealand kauri and displaced 9 tonnes. The International 8 Metre Class rule is quite complex, and the only other Australian designer to prepare plans for the class was fellow Victorian Charlie Peel, and both his ACROSPIRE III and IV designs measured in with a rating that was significantly over 8 metres, and they were uncompetitive in Sayonara Cup racing against the

European designed boats such as NORN and VANESSA . The Sayonara Cup was the most prestigious of the three Interstate challenge cups which included the Forster Cup and the Northcote Cup. Digby had already designed and built two other eights- INDEPENDANCE launched in 1932 may have measured at 8 metres but there are no records to show this, whereas Digbys next yacht from 1935 DEFIANCE is referred to as the first 8metre designed and built in Australia and does rate at 8 metres. Although rating just over 8 metres at 8.14 metres, the yacht had success in Sayonara Cup racing, and in 1951 FRANCES defended the cup against the Tasmanian built but European designed challenger ERICA J (HV000492). FRANCES was then the first Australian designed and built yacht to successfully defend the Sayonara Cup. It repeated its defence against ERICA J the following year, but then lost to ERICA J in 1953. It then became the first Australian designed and built challenger to win the trophy when it won the cup back in 1954 from ERICA J. In 1955 it faced a formidable challenge from both ERICA J and also SASKIA from NSW, imported from Europe and reputed to be the fastest 8 metre of the era. SASKIA won, but Digby's helming skill and FRANCES's speed in light weather allowed FRANCES to win one race, and this result was repeated a year later when SASKIA successfully defended the cup off Sydney Heads. SASKIA was clearly in a class above the rest, and there were no further challenges until 1962, when FRANCES, now owned by B Magnussen and O Petley and renamed BRIDGETTE challenged unsuccessfully against SASKIA. This was the last big yacht series held for this trophy, which in 2014 is now raced for by much smaller International Dragon Class yachts. FRANCES continued to race on Port Phillip under new owners T Kirkwood, then A Morrison and then M Wood before the current owner bought the yacht. It has a minimal internal fit out, and no engine, a feature of these racing yachts in their prime, while many of the existing 8's now have an engine installed.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 15.54 m x 9.37 m x 2.59 m x 1.98 m, 9.15 tonnes (51 ft x 30.75 ft x 8.5 ft x 6.5 ft, 9 tons)