

Kathleen Gillett

Norway's Bicentennial gift to Australia 1939

Norway's official Bicentennial gift to Australia celebrates a fascinating link between the two nations. In the mid-19th century Colin Archer, a Norwegian of Scottish descent, was a pioneer farmer in Queensland before returning to his homeland in 1861 to become Norway's best-known naval architect. Colin Archer was renowned for his seaworthy Norwegian fishing, rescue and pilot boats and *Kathleen Gillett* is based on one of his designs.

The famous double-ended ketch was built for Sydney artist and sailor Jack Earl and his wife Kathleen by Charles Larsen, who worked from Colin Archer drawings to develop a world-cruising yacht worthy of the Norwegian designer. While the double-ended hull has been a Scandinavian boat-building tradition since Viking times, Colin Archer applied his own theories of

hydrodynamics to this form to produce sailing craft which became known for safety in heavy seas. These qualities were valued by many ocean yacht-cruising enthusiasts.

Built over six years as funds were available, *Kathleen Gillett* was launched in March 1939 and named after Jack Earl's wife. Rigged in 1941, Kathleen was home to the couple and their children during the war years, and was also used for NSW coastal patrol.

On 26 December 1945 *Kathleen Gillett* sailed in the first Sydney-Hobart Yacht Race – an event organised by Jack and his friends who formed the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia. In June 1947 Jack Earl and crew set sail to circumnavigate the world in *Kathleen*, the second Australian yacht to complete this feat.



Specifications

Accounts written by mate Mick Morris and illustrated by Jack were published in *Seacraft* magazine as they rounded the Cape of Good Hope to South America, sailed through the Panama Canal and crossed the Pacific to New Zealand. When they returned to Australia in December 1948, *Seacraft* was flooded with requests for Colin Archer lines.

After being sold by Jack in the 1950s, *Kathleen's* adventurous career included island trade in Torres Strait and crocodile-hunting expeditions around Bougainville and the Solomon Islands. In 1967 *Kathleen* again became a cruising yacht, and again sailed in the Sydney-Hobart yacht race.

In 1987 the ketch, much changed from its original specifications, was located at Guam and purchased by the Norwegian Government as a Bicentennial Gift to the people of Australia. *Kathleen* was shipped to Sydney free of charge by Zim Shipping Australasia Pty Ltd, for restoration by Norwegian-descended boatbuilder Carl Halvorsen. The work was based on photographs and conversations with Jack Earl, and plans drawn up by Alan Payne and Partners.

Length	13.18 m on deck 11.55 m waterline
Breadth	4.45 m
Draught	2.09 m
Displacement	23.44 tonnes
Ballast	3.37 tonnes
Sail area	Gaff ketch, area 101.01 m ² with topsail

