

## Couta boat

*Thistle* is a 'couta boat', a distinctive type of commercial sailing vessel built for the barracouta fishery in Bass Strait off the coast of Victoria. Crews, usually two, fished with poles or trolling lines for couta and later, shark.

The boats were sturdy and broad beamed, with a centreboard which could be raised and lowered for good handling and drift fishing. Their powerful rig, with tall sails and down-turned bowsprit, gave them speed to outrun bad weather and for racing each other home to get the best price for the catch.

*Thistle* fished out of Port Fairy for most of its working life. It is thought to have been built on the Maribyrnong River by a builder named Jones in 1903. The couta fishery began to decline in the 1920s. In the 1960s, with an engine added, *Thistle* was used for towing, and in the 1970s was converted to a houseboat. In 1990 it was restored to an early 1900s configuration.

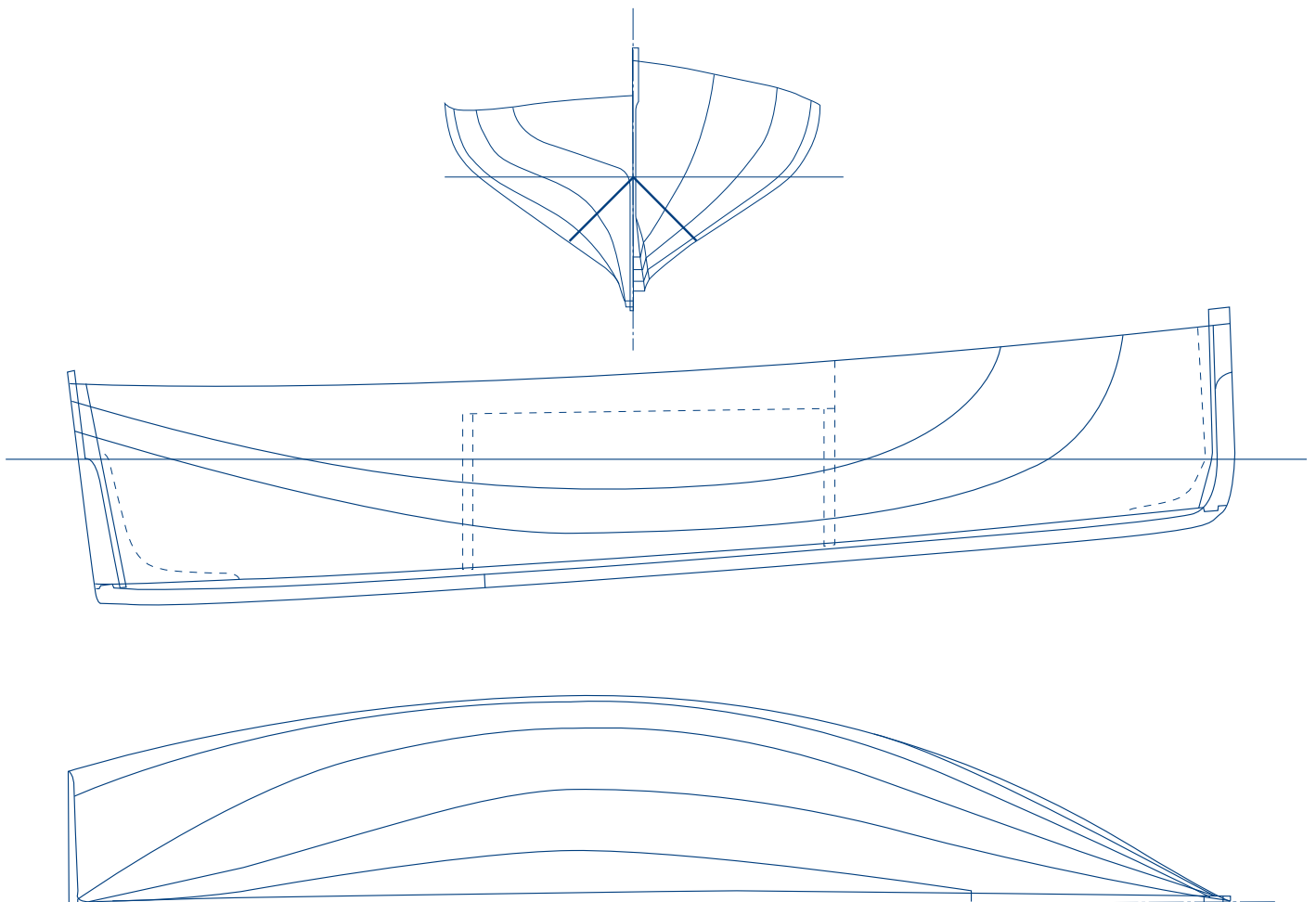


## Specifications

Built about 1903

Length	8.61 m on deck
Breadth	3.07 m
Draught	2.44 m centreboard down
Displacement	5.78 tonnes
Sail	lug-rig sloop, area 55.43 m
Construction	Carvel planking, New Zealand kauri, stem keel and sternpost Western Australian jarrah, frames blackwood, spars oregon, sails cotton
Restoration	Tim Phillips, Sorrento, Victoria

ANMM Collection



Front: *Thistle* winning the Gaffer's Day Regatta Sydney 1990 Reproduced courtesy Ace Marine Photography  
Above: Plans from drawings by Tim Phillips 1990 ANMM Collection