

Basic Detail Report



00028127

Title

Small fid from sail maker's kit

Date

1945 - 1996

Medium

Wood

Dimensions

Overall: 144 x 24 x 24 mm, 0.05 kg

Name

Fid

History

Sail making was an essential trade in the days of sail and continued to be important even when sail had declined. Sail makers worked ashore usually in sail lofts, but large ships continued to carry a sail maker in modern times. Sail makers worked closely with riggers and the two trades overlapped. Sail makers did all kinds of canvas and rope work. While most seamen were expected to be able to sew, to repair sails and rigging and to be competent at rope work and knot making was considered a skilled trade. Sail makers had to understand stresses and strengths of the materials they used, their elasticity and the degree of stretch to allow for. Before commercial standardisation of rope and canvas, sail makers developed their own ways of testing and allowances, with the tradition of sail making passed on through apprenticeships. This object was owned by Harold Browne (1924-1996), one of the last sail makers in Sydney to be trained in the traditional sail making craft. At 15 Browne began a 5 year apprenticeship in the sail loft at Garden Island, which he completed in 1945. He attempted to enlist in the RAN during the Second World War but was ineligible as he was in a Reserved Occupation. After completing the apprenticeship Browne was at sea for 2 years on tramp steamer SS COROLA, going to South America, Africa and Europe. After this he returned to Australia and worked at various ship yards and sail makers in Sydney, passing along his skill in the sail making tradition. Browne became president of the Sail Makers Union and retired in 1986.