

# AMATEUR BOAT BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION

MAY/JUNE '05

## ABBA COMMITTEE

Geoff Leggatt	President	ph 9437 5271 (Wk)	9316 8624 (Hm)
Vince Rogers	Secretary	0407 799 230	
Alan Coy	Treasurer	04142 666 77	9204 3043 (Hm)
Mike Beilby	Newsletter	ph 9397 6209 (Hm)	

Contact any of these four people for clarification of association activities.

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## BOATING ON A MINIMUM OF WATER

As you can guess from the title, the Technical Meeting for March was not on WEST System epoxy materials after all. As it happened, Alf Smallwood could have been present on the original Tuesday but not the reset Wednesday meeting. This didn't become known until after the newsletter had gone out. However, he will be available in May. To fill the gap, my wife, Margo, and I spoke together on the subject of our several adventures on English canals.

Unfortunately, the meeting was not well attended – only about a dozen – though whether this was due to the change of venue (SofPYC) or change of date could not be readily determined. But see the Admin Notes at the back, where we attempt to conduct a straw poll of members for the preferred day for meetings. The new venue seems excellent but will only be available on Wednesdays. It's cheaper than RPYC, and includes a TV and video, free. However, it's in the committee room, and Wednesday is the only day it's not needed for committee meetings. Anywhere else in the club would be much more expensive. I might add that Marg and I, along with Alan Coy and Vince Rogers, came early for the smorgasbord evening meal which follows twilight racing on that night. It was inexpensive and great grub – believe me.

But back to the canals. The Beilbys have had three trips on these, a week with a conventional hire boat in '75, a month in a privately owned, cut price boat (probably illegal) in '86, and then in '97, five months in a privately owned boat for which we'd swapped our Roleystone house and car. In all cases we moved nearly every day, but at four miles an hour, tops, one doesn't move very far – but that doesn't matter.

I started off the talk with a revue of canal history, starting with the early, mediaeval river navigations which merely brought some ports closer to the sea, and moving quickly on to the first Industrial Revolution canal. This was the Bridgewater Canal, dug between the Duke of Bridgewater's coal mines at Worsley and the city of Manchester by the engineer, James Brindley. Its completion and use immediately halved the price of coal in Manchester. Canal mania then took over in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They were all privately constructed, involving public meetings to establish companies, shares creation and selling, and Acts of Parliament to acquire the land. Canals were popular because the roads of the day were atrocious and the railways yet to be developed. One horse could tow a boat loaded with up to 25 tons at about 2 – 3mph. On a road it could only manage a couple of tons.

The canals were all dug by hand by teams of "navvies" and were "puddled" with clay to make them watertight. This same clay now makes it very hard to fill in a canal and use the area for anything else – it becomes a swamp. Various ways of getting over hills were devised, the most common being the lock. This joins two level "pounds" of different heights with a largish stone chamber, gated at each end and capable of being filled or emptied to match either the high or low pound. The early locks were 7' wide by 72' long and this dictated the maximum dimensions of the so-called "narrow boats". Later 14' wide locks were built on "wide" canals which could accept either one wide boat or a pair of narrow boats. Tunnels were dug through hills, sometimes three miles long, aqueducts marched across valleys, and various lifts were devised where the terrain was too steep for locks.

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century railways were taking over, being almost as smooth as water travel and much quicker. The canals declined and in many cases were bought out by the railways and allowed to fall into disuse, although some carrying continued up to WW11. Following the conflict the railways were nationalised and the government found it was responsible for thousands of miles of derelict canals, most of them public rights of way which could not be legally converted to anything else. These days about a third of the canals have been restored, frequently by volunteers, and the British Waterways Board supervises about 2000 miles of recreational water.

Our visual aids were a bit slim; a large map of the waterways, a couple of photo albums of the recent trips, a grandchild's toy narrowboat we'd made and painted after the last trip and a Super-8 movie shot on the first trip and copied to video. So at this point we showed the video – it was of our single week, way back in '75. We'd wanted to do a circular loop of canal known as the Cheshire Ring, but at the last minute the last section of a privately owned canal was still closed and we had to do an out and back from the hire yard which was situated on, of all places, the original Bridgewater canal. However, we were still able to experience at least three different canals, constructed by three different engineers and the resulting film, when edited, was able to show the wildlife we observed, life on board, general navigation and most importantly, lock operation over about twenty minutes.

## A LARGE, SUCCESSFUL DIY PROJECT

On Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> April we were privileged to view Neville Foster's home-built, 32' launch, "Lorna May" in her pen at S of P Y C. The plans first saw the light of day as a 27' Hartley, but Neville wanted something bigger and so enlarged it lineally by 18%. But of course, the boat is a lot more than 18% bigger. If you apply the cube rule (length by width by depth) the boat becomes 66% more displacement – nearly twice the size! So "Lorna May" is a big boat, especially for a home builder, and she is a real credit to him.

Neville spoke very well and explained all of the problems he encountered during the five year build. The building started in 1978, but that followed a planning period of a couple of years, first. Very necessary, I should think. The hull shell is mostly two layers of 1/4 inch marine ply, Dynel sheathed (Dynel was very big in those days), over oregon frames. The flared bow was planked with diagonal ply planks about 11" wide, the rest being done with almost whole

The last stage of this team effort saw Margo describing our last, and longest canal marathon on what was our big retirement trip in '97. We certainly couldn't afford to hire a boat for the projected five months so advertised in an English magazine (twice) for a house for boat swap. We only got one nibble and that nearly fell through but eventually we were off. We took over "Short Contract" just west of Leeds on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, the most northern in the system, after satisfying the owners that we could handle her, they took off for Roleystone. We headed west across the Pennines and turned south onto the Bridgewater and later the Shropshire Union and the Llangollen canal (where we picked up Mike and Mary Igglesden for a week). Earlier we'd spent some time in the heart of Manchester, and later did the same in Birmingham. We saw four rivers along the way – a little bit of the Severn, the Stratford Avon, almost all of the Thames and finished back in the north on the River Soar after the Grand Union Canal. Several times we left the boat and hired cars to see things away from the canals, including the Endeavour in Whitby, the National Wooden Boat Show at Greenwich, a steam rally at Henley on Thames, etc, etc. We eventually got "Short Contract" to the famous canal port of Shardlow on the Trent and Mersey. Returning to our start point would have involved using a fiercely tidal section of the River Trent and the owners were happier to have us leave her with a boat yard at Shardlow.

All in all it was an excellent adventure and one we were happy to share with members on the night.

ply sheets. Having convex sides and bottom, the second layer of skin glued well over the first, using Resorcinol glue. The interior was epoxied to keep water out. Spray rails of jarrah (to take punishment) were later screwed and glued on near the bow.

The boat was hoisted out of Neville's back yard by crane before fitting the engines as two big Perkins, plus gearboxes would have added two tons to the lifting weight. The engines were sourced, second-hand but in good nick, one from Marine and Harbours but I didn't note the origin of the other, and fitted at the yacht club. They both turn the same way but this doesn't seem to affect the steering. Incidentally, all the bronze castings for the boat, particularly rudder and prop shaft parts, were made from Neville's own patterns – quite a job in itself. The two engines are nearly identical, except for one detail; one's a 12v system, the other's 24v! So there are two sets of batteries and charging systems, but being big, the boat



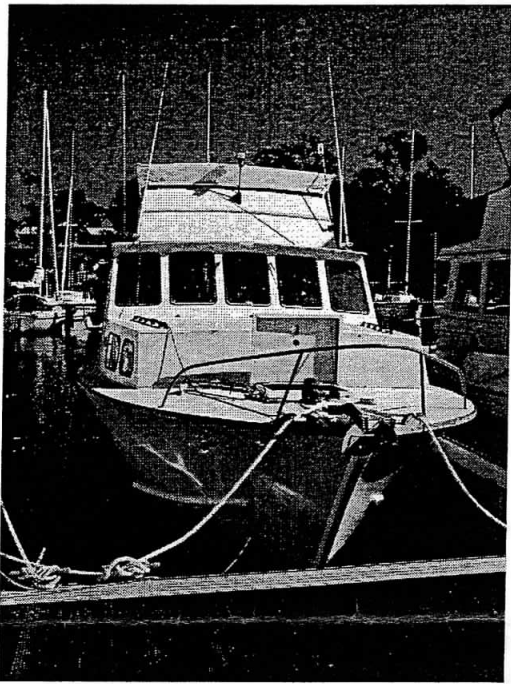


Photo 1. Launa May in her pen on one of the new South of Perth Yacht Club floating Jetties



Photo 2. Our host and builder of Launa May, Neville Foster



Photo 3. Neville explains the battery layout to Peter Leggatt



Photo 4. Mike Beilby at the helm of Launa May

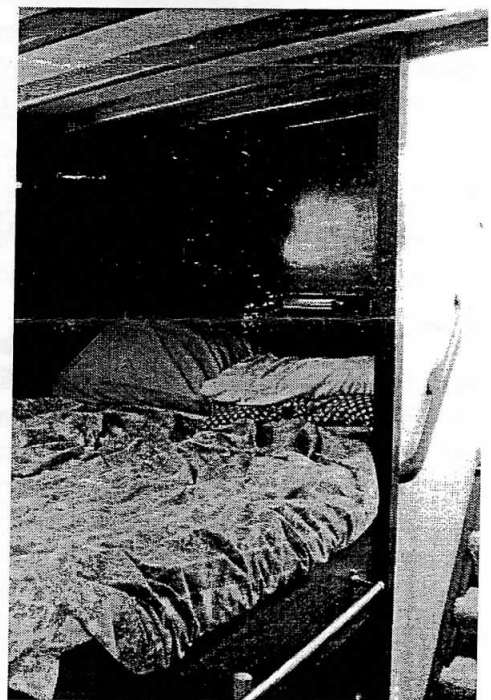


Photo 5. The midship starboard bunk adjacent to the companionway which leads to the forward double berthed cabin

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