



AMATEUR BOAT BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION

Mar/Apr 08



Your editor [r] and another visitor relax aboard the "James Craig" in Sydney

A FILM EVENING

We decided to make the Technical Meeting of Jan 30 a film night featuring the library's video of Capt. Irving Johnson's "Around Cape Horn", filmed in 1929, sound narration added in the 1980s. To this was added a portion of a DVD on the Volvo Round the World yachting race series, loaned by Paul and Rosemary Nayler. We had a good roll up of members, once again filling the Committee Room almost to capacity.

The Johnson film was originally shot aboard the huge, four masted barque "Peking", in 1929, on a voyage from Europe to Chile for a cargo of nitrate, used for fertiliser. This involved rounding Cape Horn in both

directions, although the film only covers the outward voyage.

Chris Davis had done a fair bit of internet research on the Peking and associated subjects and was able to introduce the film with a useful amount of technical detail not included in the film but very useful to us. She was built in the early years of the 20th century, 1911 to be precise, in Germany. This was a time when steam dominated the major sea routes but sail was still more economical on the lesser routes around the world, due to the fuel saving. These routes included nitrates from Chile and wheat from Australia. To be efficient these ships were

huge, probably as big as most average steamships of the day. Peking was built of steel, hull and spars, and her length on deck was 98m with an extra 17m of bowsprit, rig height was 52m (she would just fit into the average primary school sports oval) and displacement was 3,100 tons, plus about 5,000 tons of cargo. Thus she could easily be running east around Cape Horn at 8,000 tons at over 16 knots, controlled solely by muscle power with up to 4,000 sq m of sail. Peking's sister ships were still quite numerous in the 1920s and even the 30s.

The Johnson film starts, bizarrely, with shots of him riding boneshaker and pennyfarthing bicycles and later doing headstands on telephone poles in training for a career at sea. However, he soon embarks (on Friday 13 Dec, 1929 – I thought ships never went to sea on Friday 13th!) in Hamburg, Germany, and she steps straight into a North Sea gale which turned out to sink 68 other vessels. Maybe that explains the myth about Friday 13th. Peking survived reasonably well although nearly losing her main anchor and Johnson filmed its recovery and stowage on the foredeck, ready for the long voyage south when it would not be needed.

The film continues with a series of vignettes all the way. Some show the immensity of the ship and its rig (32 sails in the wardrobe) and the diminutive size of men against that rig – particularly the recovery of a shredded lower topsail in a storm, and its replacement. Early fair weather activities for the crew included exercises to learn all the 300 different ropes, in the right language – German, probably in this case, but the crew would have been from all over. Other crew activities included sail repairs, parcelling and serving shrouds, haircuts, fishing and sailmaking. Yes, sails were made on board, by hand by a team supervised by the sailmaker, and some of the lower ones would weigh, literally, a ton with limited deck space. Sails were changed to old ones for the passage through the doldrums (which only took 2.5 days on this voyage)

before bending on newer ones on entering the windier southern latitudes. When approaching the Horn it was interesting to note that safety nets were rigged above the rails to save men from being washed overboard at deck level; two men were lost overboard, probably from aloft, on the return voyage. Oddly enough, Peking was initially becalmed off the Horn but later ran into 100mph gales and she initially beat west to create 200 miles of sea room off the Chilean coast. The film ends with a landfall at Talcahuano in southern Chile after 93 days. It is a tribute to Irving Johnson's filming ingenuity, in many ways on a par with Frank Hurley's Antarctic material.

Today the Peking resides, afloat, at South Street Seaport Museum, New York, where your editor has been lucky enough to see her. The museum is finding the annual \$750,000 maintenance bill a rather large hole in the budget and so she is for sale. She looks likely to go back to Germany.

The second film was a DVD on the Volvo Round the World Race. We only had time for one segment but that covered, briefly, a history of round the world yachting, going from Slocum, through Francis Chichester, etc. Then it had footage on early RTW races, particularly Whitbread races featuring Whitbread 60s and Maxis, before going onto Volvo one class (Volvo 60) from 1997.

In 2005 the Volvo 70 class was introduced and this, using swing keels and other gadgets has led to great jumps in performance. 25 knots is commonplace and the world 24 hour sailing record for distance is out to 530 miles. This compares with about 400 miles in the days of the much larger clipper ships of about the 1870s. Suffice it to say that the present day competitors must be planing a great deal of the time.

Perhaps we can see some more of this DVD sometime, together with a film of the 1956 Hobart race which Paul and Rosemary are trying to tee up also. Thanks a lot, folks.

BUILD 'EM BIG, PT II

On Saturday, Feb 9th we again visited President Bob's launch project at Barragup, near South Yunderup. This time a large number of members made the trek and so we had a good afternoon. At the last visit, in June last year, Bob and Mike Rogers had just turned the kiri-strip-planked, 10m hull over and bolted on a pair of bilge keels. Launching was then (optimistically) projected for October. Since then Ruth Walsh has been extremely sick, with extended stays in two hospitals, followed by continuing convalescence at home and this has somewhat slowed, but not halted, the two boatbuilders.



As stated last time, the vessel is a David Payne design for 38 hp of engine with a couple of different superstructure layouts, but Bob has come up with another, with a pilot or wheelhouse amidships and lower cabins fore and aft.



Pete Russell stands in the wheelhouse space

As it happens, the lower cabins almost meet the rafters of the rented shed and the wheelhouse would protrude above them, locking the boat in, so it will have to be built removable and only fitted permanently after the boat leaves the shed. Headroom in these

cabins is at least 185cms so there'll be no crouching on this vessel.



Matt Luff demonstrates the available headroom

Five windows per side are already framed into the aft cabin top and Bob is planning bronze portholes for the forepeak. One drawback to this design is that the wheelhouse is high enough to deny passage beneath the Ravenswood bridge, so Bob will be confined to the lower reaches of the Murray. Still, turning around further upstream may have been difficult anyway.

The diesel engine has already been purchased. It's a Chinese "Lomartech" of 65hp and would appear to be a Nissan copy. It cost the remarkably low sum of \$5,700, complete and should have more than enough power. It was originally designed to go in what amounts to the centre of the saloon and shaft angles were set up for that, but the boys have now moved it forward to a point immediately abaft the pilot-house bulkhead and under the companionway which leads down from the pilot-house to the saloon – much less in the way. The shaft angles will have to change, but not by much.

I stated in the previous newsletter that the bilge keels were of lead and came to 200kg; wrong! They are only timber and hence, weightless. They are intended as anti-roll baffles only, not ballast. The ballast is all at the centre in the form of scrap metal cast into a concrete keel or deadwood and weighs in

the region of 600kg. However, this hull is so big and buoyant I feel Bob will need considerably more ballast beyond this. The keel had the original shaft angle cast into it but the blokes think they can adjust this for the new engine position. More stern ballast may be needed to balance the new engine position, too.

One problem that Bob and Mike have struck is bubbling of the fibreglass sheathing on the Kiri strip-planked hull. This has been quite severe and has necessitated grinding areas of the sheath off and re-applying it. It seems to have happened only on the second side of the planking on each occasion. One possibility could be that air trapped in the super-lightweight Kiri timber (one side being already sealed, remember) expands with a temperature increase and bubbles out through the 'glass. If that's the case, one solution would be to apply the resin at the hottest part of the day, from which temperatures can only drop, leading to a contraction of the trapped air instead of expansion.

The internal accommodation is still evolving somewhat but as it stands there's a chain locker up for'ard, followed by bathroom and head, the pilot-house, a really spacious saloon and a small open air promenade at the stern. Bob plans to work on for a month or two longer in the shed, before transferring to his South Yunderup home where he has a canal frontage and a launching ramp.



And at the other end of the scale, Chris Sebire brought along his completed Wee Rob canoe – a 12' Iain Oughtred design for glued clinker. This boat was remarkably light, due largely to its 4mm planks in, I think, gaboony ply. This one will have no trouble passing under the Ravenswood bridge! Probably float on a paddock after a heavy dew, too. He can just get it on and off the roof of his 4WD singlehanded. The canoe is a real credit to Chris and we hope he has a lot of fun with it, too.

So, many thanks for this second visit, Bob. You're still making great progress and we'll want to see it in the water, later. And many thanks for the beers – they were just the shot on a hot afternoon. In the meantime we hope Ruth's convalescence continues well and that she makes a full recovery in the near future.

ADMINISTRATION NOTES

ABBA COMMITTEE

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PARKING at SoPYC: Things have changed, and not for the better, from our point of view. The Management Committee has removed the communication speaker from the gate to the bar and now restricts access to the parking area to holders of membership cards,

so Colin Hoffman, the Food and Beverage Manager, tells me. Looks like we all park out in the street from now on.

LIBRARY: We are purchasing the Clinker Construction CD from Denman Marine in

Tasmania, as advertised in AABB for Jan-Mar. It's HTML formatted, so you'll need a computer to view it. It contains over 400 photos and text, mainly on building a Paul Gartside-designed, 10' clinker dinghy. This should cover most of the skills needed for traditional lapstrake construction and much of it should be applicable to the glued construction as well. It should be of great interest to a large proportion of our membership. Hopefully it will be available by the time you read this, or soon after. Contact Mike Rogers. If you want your own copy it'll only cost about \$40, cheap compared with the dinghy itself.

MARCH TECHNICAL MEETING

This is on Wed, March 26 in the Committee Room of SofPYC at about 7.45. The speaker

will be Charlie Irwin of Fibreglass and Resin Sales, talking on the subject of materials his business handles that are of use to us. Charlie has been in the game a long time and many of his customers are hobbyists with unusual questions so yours won't leave him non-plussed. Don't forget the club's evening meal if you're that way inclined.

APRIL TOOLBOX MEETING

This month we return to Swarbrick and Swarbrick Yachts at 28 Sparks Rd, Henderson, having first been there in mid '06. They've long since finished the S&S 34 they were building then but now have a couple more on the go, plus a string of other projects as well. It should be at least as interesting as the previous visit. That's Saturday, April 12, 2 – 4pm.

EAST PERTH WOODEN BOAT SHOW

Now listen up, all of you. This event is finally here, and we've finally found out about it, but we haven't got much preparation time. This newsletter is going out a bit early to try and help. It's being organised by the City of Perth, not EPRA, this time and will be open to the public from 10.30 to 4.30, on Sunday, Mar 30, at Claisebrook. Once again there will be floating and hardstanding space, although be warned, the latter can be a little cramped, but it's good to have the two close together. Exhibitors will, of course, need to get there well before 10.30. You'll notice "Jazz" has been removed from the title, although there'll be music of some sort.

Registration forms need to be filled in in advance and are available from Molly Coy. Best to ring her on 9204 3043 or 0414 490 043 or email her at molly.book@gmail.com Then complete the form and return it to her ASAP. Molly suggests emailing it back, but her actual address, if needed, is 6 Stow Crt, Wembley Downs, 6019.



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