



# AMATEUR BOAT BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION

May/June 2010



Bob Hopkins' Redfin 22 in his City Beach workshop, awaits paint

## A LOVE FOR LIFE

No, I'm not talking about Mike Igglesden's wife, Mary, this time, although the title could well apply to her, too. This time it's about Mike's life-long love of boats and the water. This was the subject of his talk to us on Wednesday, March 31.

To preface his talk Mike had a quote from Francis Drake from 1588 (the year of the Great Armada) on the screen. It's worth quoting again, in view of all the unfinished boat projects we hear about:

"There must be a beginning of any great matter, but continuing unto the end until it be thoroughly finished yields the true glory."

It's not surprising to learn then that Mike comes from England, probably from the South East corner, Kent or some such because he'd tackled his first boat restoration by age

16 in Dover! He also did a fair bit of coastal and North Sea cruising aboard a restored Brixham trawler owned by older friends and one of his pictures showed him astride the giant bowsprit of this vessel, which, sadly, was later wrecked. There were photographs of several restorations in England including a couple of a Snipe dinghy. He sailed these boats after restoration, of course, and one of them capsized so frequently it eventually cost him a girl friend. (I almost know the feeling myself, after a certain Lady Skippers' race at Mosman Junior Sailing Club a long while ago)

Eventually the Igglesdens emigrated, to Tasmania, and Mike found work at Muirs, the boat builders there and restorations continued. There were shots of a small sailing cruiser

which he started but never finished while in Tassie (how does that Drake quote go again, Mike?) and another of an immaculate Huon pine dinghy he built there for someone on Bruny Island. Then, for some reason unexplained, Mike moved west to God's own country and has been here ever since. It seems he became a manual arts teacher at Hollywood High School and one shot of an early project showed it to be a Rainbow scow dinghy then just starting on the Swan – it's interesting to note that this class started in Tasmania. Rainbows were 11' long, with a generous sail area for a crew of two. Unlike VJs they had a large spinnaker set on an 11' spinnaker pole which had to break down into two or three pieces for stowage. Must have been real fun setting them in a sea breeze. Anyway, the one built at HHS later won an Australian title so someone was setting it right.

Mike then transferred his boat love to GP 14s, the famous 14' Jack Holt design. He built "Tintookie" at home to start the class in WA and later won an Australian title with a later own-built, "Merry Jest". I suspect he was also a leading light in the GP 14 administration and there were several shots of overland road trips to contest eastern states GP championships, towing a 14 behind a Kombi, past God-forsaken places such as Ivy Tanks on the old, unsealed Eyre Highway. The dreadful condition of this road never seemed to deter the dozens of WA yachties who annually made the pilgrimage to ES venues to compete in championships for VJs, Moths, GPs, skiffs, 14' Dinghies, Flying Dutchmen, you name it. I wouldn't mind betting there were more doing it in the '60s and '70s than now, when the road is fully sealed. And just to stay thoroughly involved, Mike also ended up as the WA Ed. Dept's sailing teacher, as Chris Davis informed us, taking sailing lessons with students from a dozen or more different high schools, using the eminently suitable GP 14 on Mounts Bay. When Mike left this activity the classes morphed into the first RYA training courses in WA.

And so we come to "Oriël", Mike's maritime infatuation for the last seventeen years or so. Officially she's a Thornycroft Auxiliary Knockabout, 18' of open, gunter rigged

sailing sloop – clinker planked with an inboard engine as well. Thornycrofts first built these in England some time before WWII and Mike thinks Oriël dates to some time in the '40s or '50s, one of a dozen built in Singapore. She's one of three known of in this state. When he found her she was afloat on a mooring but badly in need of restoration. Early shots showed her being towed home and shoe-horned into a side garage up a narrow driveway. Once in place I'm not sure how Mike ever moved around her, it was that tight. Cleaning the oil and other mess from inside the ribbed, clinker hull alone took 100 hours! This done, the planks had to be kept moist so that they wouldn't dry out and open up and this was achieved covering them with sacking (inside the hull) and damping with an artfully draped Soakit hose.

It was worth doing this as the planks were generally OK and they remain with the boat to this day so that was one lucky break. Some were a little split here and there and needed patching up with WEST System epoxy but that's holding well. Not so the ribs – they were all replaced, bit by bit, the new ones being steamed in a gas-fired steamer, taking about 20 minutes' steaming apiece. The centreplate was an even bigger problem. The original Thornycroft bronze one had been replaced at some time with a steel one which had rusted, expanded and locked itself into the 'case and nothing would shift it. This was exacerbated by a previous owner pouring cement into the case as well (probably during a non-sailing period of her career). Lifting it just lifted the whole boat with the threat of serious damage to the keel and adjacent hull. There was nothing for it but to cut out the whole centrecase and remove the mess completely. The new centreplate is once again of steel, galvanised, but Mike looks after it and NO cement is involved. It's also somewhat increased in area at the bottom (see diagram below).

The Stuart P55 engine is a twin-cylinder two stroke (the originals had P5 singles) and Mike has acquired no less than four of them in the vain hope of creating one good one – trouble was all four exhibited the same weaknesses and areas of wear and I doubt if parts are available. He got there in the end with one but



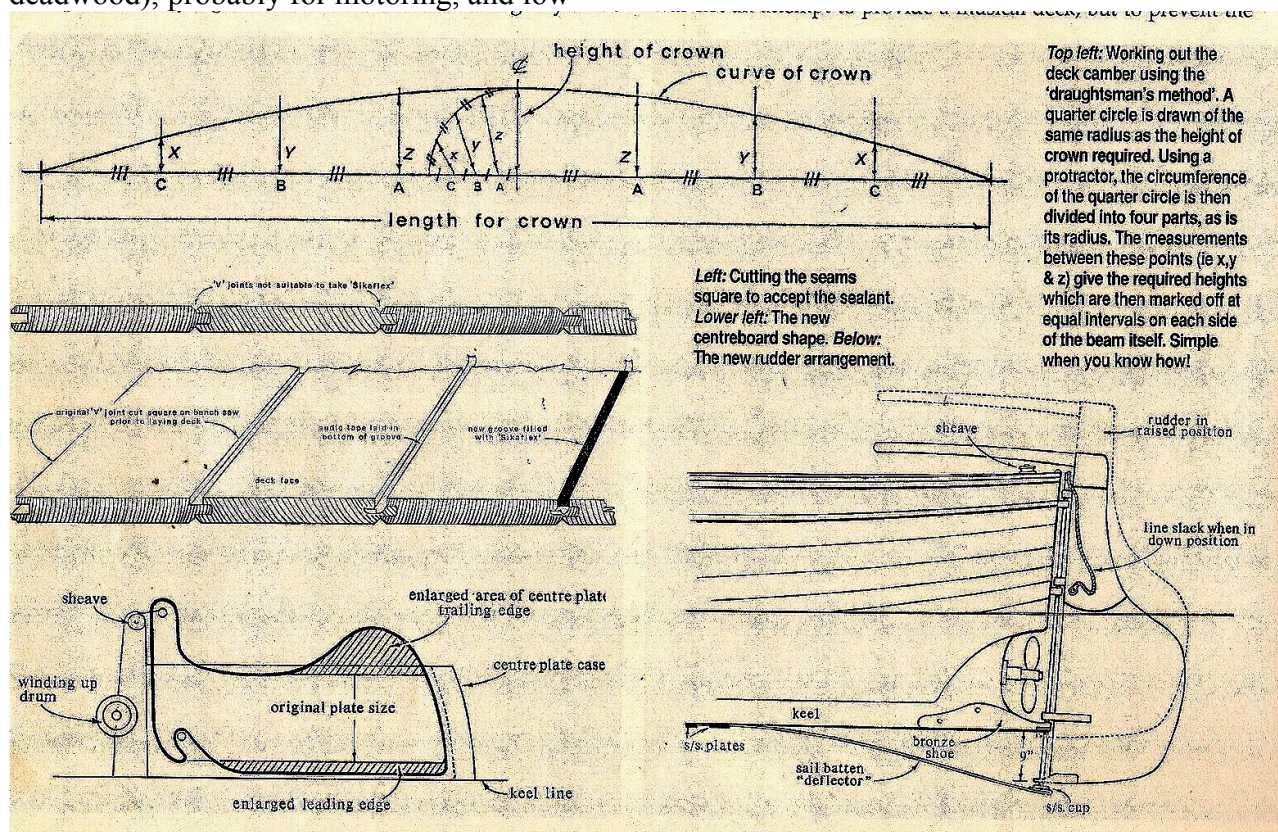
even that had to have some areas built up with Plastibond to replace corroded metal. Still, it runs well but Mike is planning to pension it off as he has a small outboard that does the job quite well and it doesn't drag a prop through the water while sailing.

When it came to decking, the foredeck lacked enough camber so the beams were built up to a respectable curve before redecking (see diagram again) with what Mike kept referring to as "matchboard" but we seem to know it as tongue and groove, in what looked like pine. Each plank had the upper V-groove over the tongue opened out on a jugged circular saw to make room for later caulking with Sikaflex. This exercise can often become very messy but Mike just filled each groove to just over-full direct from the cartridge gun, let it set well and then sliced off the surplus with a sharp chisel. Then it was on to fitting a cockpit coaming, seats, thwarts and so on.

One feature is the boat's lifting rudder (I'm not sure if it's a Thornycroft original or not). The rudder has four gudgeons and there are only three on the hull all lined up on a full length rudder pin. This allows the rudder to be used high (level at the bottom with the deadwood), probably for motoring, and low

(about 6" below the deadwood) presumably for sailing. Ever the perfectionist, Mike built in a flexible fibreglass batten along the keel which flexed down when the rudder was in low position and was supposed to deflect ropes in the water (yes, diagram again) – would be great in Geraldton – but something snapped it off quite early and it hasn't been replaced.

Eventually the restoration was completed and "Oriel" settled into her role as a family camping boat and occasional Old Gaffer participant. When we say "family" we mean three generations, the grandkids think she's lovely. There were numerous shots of stays at such places as Rottneest, Garden Island, Rockingham and as far up the Swan as Guildford. Clearly she's part of the family and will ever remain so. Mike spoke well and made it all very interesting. He was aided extensively by Chris Davis who had earlier set up all the photos on disc allowing a computer projection presentation and who actually punched the computer during the show, leaving Mike free to talk easily. They made a great team. Thanks very much, fellers.



These diagrams came originally from the Classic Boat article of July '95 and illustrate some of the points above



## GARAGES ARE FOR BOAT BUILDING

We had a great Toolbox Visit to Bob Hopkins' City Beach home on Saturday, April 10 where he's building the trailer-sailer about which he spoke briefly at the recent Show and Tell night. As you can see, it's a tight squeeze in the double garage under the house, especially down the port side and under the ceiling. The boat is about 6.5m of Redfin 22 and the available length is about 8m. I guess he works with the doors open!



Klaus, visitor Mike Thompson, Bob and Ted Smith  
The building has been very completely described by the designer, Barrie Armstrong, in about the last three issues of "Australian Amateur Boat Builder", but basically it's a multi-chine, stitch and glue boat in 8 or 9mm ply. Such hulls are usually very much stiffened up with the incorporation of glassed-in tanks, bulkheads and seats. To make the fitting in of these latter items easier Bob only stitched and glued the main hull up to the second chine when he could still lean over the side easily, smart! At this stage Bob has all but completed the ply work – the aft side decks are all that remain to glue down. This leaves him access for finishing off the quarter berths.



Although there's a generous cabin, it's situated well forward leaving little fore deck as such but allowing for a long, self-draining cockpit aft. Makes sense to me. The mast then steps on the coachroof and is supported by a very robust ring frame underneath. The centrecase sits almost completely under the cockpit floor; there's just enough of it in the cabin to support a step down through the hatch. That seems brilliant. It means that the whole centrecase top is closed off and centreplate removal is only possible out the bottom, but at least there's no water splashing out of the 'case.

The design is very light, about 500kg in the finished hull and to stabilize it water ballast is used. To this end side ballast tanks are built into the side seats in the cabin, both fore and aft of the main ring frame. So it'll take some time to fill them at the launching ramp (they'll empty by gravity through gate valves in the bottom) but the result is a nice light towing weight on the road.

Three hatches are used in the boat; a small anchor well hatch, a large one in the forward end of the cabin through which sails can be hoisted and the main, sliding hatch at the aft cabin break. This latter gave Bob much cause for thought about sealing against water penetration but his present system, using interlocking track, should spill any water that comes over. In any case the cabin top is high and won't get very wet anyway. Very sensibly the fore cabin hatch is to be glazed with windows to let light into the forepeak.



Although he's done a fair bit of sailing, which no doubt helped in his selection of such a sensible design, this is Bob's first attempt at building, apart from a Jack Holt 13' Pacer dinghy which he built thirty years ago in South Africa. He started with very few power tools – an orbital sander, an electric drill and a 14" bandsaw purchased at a giveaway price from Hugh Jones when that ex-member moved to Melbourne.



The main ring frame and galley

He's since added an electric hand planer to the collection and I saw a small palm sander in the boat as well. Bob bought the pre-cut kit and found some inaccuracies in the panels which needed adjustment and at this stage

would advise those following to buy the uncut kit and check all fits before cutting out. That said, cutting out is a big job and would no doubt necessitate more space than Bob's got.

The kit builders, Armstrong and his son-in-law, Rob Askew, have since produced some laser-cut versions which no doubt fit better but are pretty busy building complete boats so one may have difficulty getting a kit at all – a great pity because the design looks excellent to me. One other problem Bob struck, which wasn't covered in the kit instructions, came when he set out to epoxy saturate all the ply panels. He slathered all panels, top and bottom, with two coats of Bote Cote epoxy before building them into the boat. Unfortunately this stiffened the panels significantly against bending and made fitting them onto the boat almost impossible in some cases. He now wishes he'd left all saturation until after the hull was finished!

All in all it was a very worthwhile Toolbox Visit and maybe kit building is not a bad way to go at all. Many thanks for your hospitality, Bob.

## AND IF WE WANT TO GET SERIOUS

Some of you may not know that the Wooden Boat Centre, Tasmania runs full time, 18 month courses in traditional boat building. The Certificate III in Traditional Wooden Boatbuilding is a nationally accredited course leading to professional places in the boat building industry. It operates on 5-day, 40-hour weeks with public holidays and two one-week breaks. The Certificate Course contains substantial knowledge as well as extensive practical skills, however, the learning is principally undertaken through practical application and "learning by doing" rather than by lecture and formal instruction.

Students, limited to eight, participate in the building of a traditional cruising yacht of more than 30' in length over three stages of construction. The first covers frame and ribbing, the second, planking and the third is

decking, fit out and spars, plus launching. Normal admission requirements are a combination of woodworking skills, a high level of English language literacy, a well developed critical faculty, numeracy sufficient for workshop calculations required in boatbuilding, an ability to manipulate simple formulae and understand the properties of triangles and circles, a reasonable level of physical fitness and a commitment and a serious determination to complete the course.

Perhaps the last prerequisite won't be all that hard to achieve after one has written out, in advance, the cheque for \$18,000 to cover course fees. But steep though that seems, it only works out to \$1000 per month. The course is designed for adults and entry is competitive with no more than eight being

selected each time. Once offered a place an applicant can not then defer to a later course. Full details and an application form can be obtained by emailing [woodenboatcentre@bigpond.com](mailto:woodenboatcentre@bigpond.com) or writing to: The Manager,  
Wooden Boat Centre Tasmania  
PO Box 159

HUONVILLE, TASMANIA, 7109  
AUSTRALIA.

The next course will commence approximately mid-2011. Mind you, if you take up this offer it may destroy your amateur status!

**VALE: ROB SEWELL, 1940 - 2010**

It is with a great deal of sadness that I advise that one of our long standing members, Rob Sewell, passed away suddenly last week in the USA.

Rob had been associated with everything boating since he commenced sailing in a home built Rainbow in his boyhood days - and he had all the tales of adventure that went with this experience.

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Rob's family at this sad time.

Chris Davis  
ABBA  
25 April, 2010

Thank you, Chris. As editor I'd like to comment on Rob's passing as well. I knew Rob, with his twin brother, Peter, when we were all at Perth Mod in 4<sup>th</sup> Year in about 1956. The two Sewells were a hot team in Rainbows (I think they won a National Title) and as I was crewing in VJs we had a fair bit of talking on the relative class merits - we never did agree which was the better boat!

And it was actually Rob who introduced me to ABBA, in the late '90s, because, like most amateur boat builders in WA, I didn't know such a group existed. After not having met for 40 years we ran into each other at something

completely different and soon got onto the old topic and here I am. But it took Peter Leggatt to fill me in on Rob's subsequent boating career. Seems it was mostly in cruisers; everything from crewing on twilights with Peter and Chris to navigating in the Bali race. Apparently he even developed his own navigation charts based on Perth, rather than Greenwich, as the zero meridian! Clearly he will be sadly missed by a large swathe of the boating community.

Mike Beilby  
Editor.

# ADMINISTRATION NOTES

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## 2010 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This is a preliminary notice of ABBA's AGM for 2010, sufficient to give one month's notice so that we comply with the INCORPORATIONS ACT. Consequently this meeting will be held at the evening meeting of July 28, 2010, at South of Perth Yacht Club, commencing at 8.00pm.

**MAY TECHNICAL MEETING.** This will be held at SoPYC at 8pm on 26 May. It will be basically a film night featuring three films of steam launches on the Thames and Lake Windemere. The main film features an umpire's steam launch, "Consuga" – a long, narrow vessel, virtually wakeless, designed to keep up with rowing 8s for coaching purposes. Then there are two more films covering steam launches in general on both the Thames and Windemere. These are all courtesy of Mike Rogers.

**JUNE TOOLBOX MEETING.** This event will take us back to Mick O'Shea's workshop beside "Grandis Cottages", 45 Casuarina Place, Henley Brook, between 2 and 4pm on Saturday, 12 June. He hasn't finished his Elliott Bay Steam Launch yet, but has made a lot of progress, mainly on the engine but also on the hull fit-out. I know he's had the engine turning on an electric motor but I'm not sure if it will be in actual steam on the day. Still, it will be good to see.



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