



AMATEUR BOAT BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION

May/June 2012

NOKOMIS — WHAT A GRAND OLD LADY

Our toolbox visit for June was to one of the boatsheds adjacent to Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club which are heritage in themselves. Hidden inside is the beautiful motor launch 'Nokomis', looking largely as she did when launched in 1923 but recently extensively refurbished to a very high standard. Our host on the day was Mark Donati who has been actively involved at the sharp end throughout this project. Mark has also very kindly compiled the interesting report on this project below. It was a great visit and we thank Mark for arranging this with Nokomis's owner.



Nokomis is a 40 foot motor boat launched in 1923 for prominent Perth motor dealer Wentworth John 'Jack' Winterbottom.

She was built by the Lawrence yard at the foot of William Street to a design by John Easton, and represents typical American day-boat design of the early 1920's. The two parties also collaborated to build Kiewa in 1913 and Winnilya for department store proprietor Frank Boan in 1938.

Nokomis is named after Longfellow's poem 'Song of Hiawatha' - Nokomis is Hiawatha's grandmother — and when Winterbottom replaced her in 1938, it was with a 50 foot Halvorsen named, appropriately, Hiawatha.



Nokomis is planked with kauri pine riveted to karri ribs on a jarrah keel. Where possible the inside half of the laminated ribs continued from gunwhale to gunwhale. The decks are of oregon pine nailed to their beams, and the super structure is Queensland maple.

The original engine was a 572 cubic inch 6 cylinder side valve petrol engine manufactured by the Scripps company of Detroit, and produced 60 HP at 950 RPM. The Scripps E-6 was replaced by a Thorneycroft marinisation of the 'flathead' Ford V8 when she was requisitioned by the navy in 1942, and this engine itself was replaced by a 4.236 Perkins in the late 1960's.

The 'Grey Funnel Line' also fitted her with two depth charges on the transom and a flat mounting built over the after cabin to accommodate a machine gun, before sending her to patrol the approaches to Geraldton. She was disposed of in November 1945, and has been in her present berth ever since.



But the years have taken their toll. The type of construction described earlier gives, say, 20 years service before money needs to be spent.

Repairs to the foc'sle and after cabin bulkheads, after cockpit, and the addition of intermediate ribs in the stern (ie between the existing ribs, not to be confused with sister ribbing) was relatively straightforward because of the accessibility of these parts.

The foc'sle also required intermediate ribs, but here it was a different story, and one which challenges the wisdom received about old wooden boats.



The problem was that the new ribs could only be fed between plank and stringer from above, which entailed removing not only the covering board at the perimeter of the fore-deck, but also all the after deck fittings, rubbing stakes, canvas sheath and securing beads etc.

Access to the inside of the hull necessitated removal of all the internal furniture and fittings. Ceilings, bunks, bulkheads, shelves, lockers and floors and bearers were all removed to permit clenching of the copper nails.

Disassembly was satisfying simple, because extensive use had been made of galvanised nails and brass and steel crews – remember she only had to last a couple of decades – and things came apart with well aimed hammer blows.



The nails are the restorer's first problem, since the galvanising fails with time, and the nails rust and grow in their apertures, making clean removal from the timber problematic.

The next surprise was that the timber which was not immediately visible – the deck beams above the pressed copper deck head in the sleeping cabin, the floor bearers and the outboard side of the cypress ceilings – was rough and unworked, just in the condition in which it left the saw mill.

Moreover, Nokomis appeared to have been painted and varnished only upon completion and only then to parts that could easily be seen or reached with a brush.

And more unforeseen challenges — adding ribs changes the shape of a hull, and consequently furniture that was close fitting on construction may require modifications to fit the new shape.



The half bulkheads at the foot of the bunks in the sleeping cabin were replaced by routed plywood to imitate the original tongue and groove jarrah. On re fitting, it was found that the old bulkheads were not plumb, and that filler pieces had been added to the bunk framing to disguise the gap.

The other problem with a refit such as this is that once an item has been repaired or refurbished everything else around it has to be brought up to the same standard.

Newly reconditioned and plated portholes, for example, meant that deck fittings in the vicinity also required plating, as did the stanchions in the midships cockpit.

By then the bezels on the 40 odd year old engine instruments were starting to look shabby, so they too had to be plated or replaced — ad infinitum!



And then the three door locks to the cabins, which were removed unmemorable years ago needed to be sourced from somewhere. Fortunately, locks, toilet and galley pumps, cabin hooks, and sundry other chandlery items were obtained from Davey & Co in the UK. These parts fitted existing apertures and 'witness marks' perfectly, suggesting that the originals may have been supplied by them in the first place.



So, will hundreds of hours of remediation make her good for another 89 years? Probably not, an elusive specialist opinion (which cannot be confirmed at the time of writing) suggests that a restored building is good for another sixty years, but a restored wooden boat is good for twelve — which will take Nokomis to 101 and into her second century.

May Technical Meeting

At the May technical meeting we watched a film provided by Harry Speight entitled "Charlotte — A Wooden Boat Story". The 'short' synopsis of the film is reproduced below. This was a very interesting night and we thank Harry for bringing this film to our notice. For those who were unable to attend, the 'extended' synopsis and a great deal of more fascinating information is on the website at www.charlottethefilm.com or buy the film through the website and 'enjoy'.

"CHARLOTTE is a film about an extraordinary boatyard, the Gannon & Benjamin Marine Railway, located on the island of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts.

Ross Gannon and Nat Benjamin established the boatyard in 1980 with the purpose of designing, building, and maintaining traditionally built wooden boats, and in the process they transformed Vineyard Haven harbor into a mecca for wooden boat owners and enthusiasts. After a long career of designing and constructing boats for others, Nat embarks on building a 50 foot gaff rigged schooner for use by his family and friends - her name is Charlotte. Through close observation of the everyday activities of the boatyard, the film emerges as a meditation on tradition, craftsmanship, family, community, our relationship to nature, and love of the sea."

Some Brief Catchup

MARCH TECHNICAL MEETING

At the March technical meeting, Robert Bingham gave an inspiring presentation on how he researched, designed and then built his own stainless steel marine heat exchanger and cooling system for his V8 ski boat *Bruce*. Robert led us through the whole process from the highly technical design elements to the practical aspects of manufacture and assembly. He presented all the calculations and graphical models that he developed before commencing in the workshop. And as they say 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating' - yes of course it worked a treat when installed in the boat. If you need one, just ask Robert—well I'm sure he'll give you some guidance but I'm not sure he wants to make another one!

APRIL TOOLBOX MEETING

The April toolbox meeting was a visit to the Maylands Boatyard to inspect Alun Dufty's motor launch *Margaret* (pictured under maroon covers below) which had been recently serviced on the Maylands slip. Alun has been undertaking an ongoing program of extensive work on this vessel and is currently working on the main cabin. Unfortunately, your relief scribe was unable to attend this visit but I am given to understand that a follow up visit may be in order at a later date when Alun has progressed further with his project. Thank you for providing 'open house' to members for this toolbox Alun.



ADMINISTRATION NOTES

ABBA COMMITTEE

President	Vacant	
Vice President	Rosemary Nayler	9455 1470
Sec/Treasurer/Relief Editor	Chris Davis	9387 5042
Asst Editor	Jay Niven	9291 8460
Library	Mike Rogers	9527 7313

A VOTE OF THANKS

Members will have received the email last week advising of Paul Thompson's resignation from his roles within ABBA . I would like to record here that ABBA accepts Paul's resignation with a great deal of regret and thanks him for his considerable effort as President of ABBA over a period of years and for his more recent production of the newsletter following Mike Beilby's retirement.

JULY TECHNICAL MEETING

For the July Technical Meeting (Wednesday 25th July), Ron Lindsay has agreed to provide a presentation on the early phase of the restoration of his launch Kiewa, built in 1913 by W & S Lawrence, a close relative of Ron's. Ron has also arranged for his shipwright Kevin Hart to join us to explain some of the finer points of the restoration detail to us. Some of you will be familiar with the high quality of the workmanship on this project and the passion with which Ron and Kevin are going about it, so this night will be a great opportunity to hear from both of them as they approach the re launching time for this wonderful vessel. I would like to thank Ron and Kevin for agreeing to present to us at such short notice. I urge you all to make a date in your diary for 25 July. I look forward to seeing you there - South of Perth Yacht Club, 8:00 pm with dinner before if you are interested.

AUGUST TOOLBOX MEETING

Ron has also agreed to host the next toolbox visit for ABBA members to see Kiewa as she approaches launching time. However, we will break with the normal cycle and schedule this later than normal at a date to be advised.....so stay tuned folks. Once again, this will be a toolbox not to be missed.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2012

Please note that the AGM of ABBA will be held at the South of Perth YC at 8pm on Wednesday, Sept 26. A further reminder will appear in the next newsletter. This early announcement is to make sure we give at least a month's notice in writing, nothing more.

MEMBERSHIP

With the new financial year upon us, membership fees are now due. Subs remain unchanged at \$20 for the electronic newsletter and \$30 for hard copy. They are payable to the treasurer, Chris Davis, either at the evening meeting of July 25 or by post to him at 9 Johnson St, Wembley, WA, 6014. Please make your payments early: it makes life a lot easier for Chris.

LIBRARY

The ABBA Library has an extensive collection of books and magazines. We are currently seeking a custodian of the library. Mike Rogers has done a terrific job over the years as our Librarian but feels it's time to hand the role over to another member. If you have room for the collection of books and magazines please contact Chris Davis. Thanks to Mike and Patricia for taking care of our library for so long.