



# AMATEUR BOAT BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION

Nov/Dec 09



Some of the projects awaiting TLC at Maylands Slipway

## END OF AN ERA

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September saw the auctioning off of all the effects of the Wooden Boat Works in Slip St, Fremantle. The Works, originally conducted by Brian Phillips in a portion of B Shed on Victoria Quay, then run by Tupp Lahiff following a move to bigger premises at 1 Slip St, eventually reverted to Brian again, following Tupp's death. As it happened, the FPA wouldn't allow Brian to operate from Slip St and so, for a time, he used premises at Henderson, but he always had plans to set up a Vintage operation at the port, fitting in with the ideas of the Maritime Heritage Association as well.

Then the FPA gave Brian notice to quit Slip St, apparently having other plans for the site, not really disclosed at this stage. (Shades of the B Shed Motor Museum?) After battling for so long, Brian decided he'd had enough and retirement looked an attractive option. However he had a lot of stuff to clear out, both at Henderson and more importantly, at Slip St and this latter had to be cleared out fairly quickly to satisfy the landlords. Hence

the auction which covered, as far as I could tell, all the effects from Henderson as well.

Quite a while before the 10 am start there was a huge press of people there with all parking, legal and otherwise, taken up in Slip St. Needless to say, halfway through the auction the infamous Fremantle grey ghosts arrived and started booking people, which caused some disruption but fortunately a yard at the end of the street was opened up and made available. There are yellow, No Parking lines painted down most of the street, I know, but this was a Sunday morning. Did it matter for any other purpose except revenue raising?

The items for sale were organised into group lots as in most such clearance sales with, say, a box of hand planes as one lot, a finished boat another and a stack of timber as a third. Buyers had to bid for an entire lot at a time. They took up so much space one wonders where Brian found room to build boats or conduct classes. There were 215 lots in all, the auctioning of which took about three

hours. With one exception, a personal boat of Brian's, there were no reserves set on anything and so some lots went very cheaply. I had to leave at Lot 196 but up to that stage 27 lots had drawn bids of only \$5 or less while 15 had raised no interest at all. 38 drew bids of between \$6 and \$20. The 15 unsold lots Brian has to dispose of. Some of these were just rubbish but one was a Dragon class yacht (the hull at least) all 30' of it. One hopes he can find a taker for this elegant item.

In the early stages of the sale there seemed to be a positive buying frenzy, especially for power tools with all lots going for reasonable to good prices. The auctioneer's catalogue showed estimated starting prices against each lot but these were often wildly under or over the mark. At one stage eight lots of "tools" went for between \$80 and \$250, despite being rated at only \$30 per lot. A three phase woodturning lathe drew \$200 and miraculously, an early Hercus metal lathe fetched \$3000! A box of designing weights (really big ones, they were) drew \$55 while six glazed portholes fetched \$410. The first of the boats for sale, a vintage "sneak" boat (so called because it was used to sneak up, under oars, on illegal fishermen) and appearing to need only caulking drew a pleasing \$860. A part-finished dinghy fetched \$310, while three completed ones averaged \$1200 each. The story was not

nearly so happy with larger boats, most needing restoration or completion. Brian's own boat was passed in at half the reserve price and even an elegant, mahogany sailing hull, nearly completed, drew only \$1250 – worth at least treble that. A large quantity of boat building timber, including long lengths, valued at about \$6000, went for \$1150. Office equipment and many work benches went for almost nothing at all.

So in the end it seemed to be the power tools which saved the day – there wasn't much interest in traditional handtools (not that there were many but I thought collectors would show up). But of the power tools there were hand tools, bench tools and about four electric welders. All seemed to draw fair, if not extravagant, prices. Sadly for our hobby, very little interest was shown in boats needing restoration or in the several dinghy building jigs or the frames therefore. A wall of building frames, covering eleven different designs, went for only \$40.

The sale returned a small amount more than the Auctioneers' estimated starting prices total but this will be reduced considerably by Brian's setting up expenses of quite a few thousand dollars. However it will add something to his retirement fund and we can only wish him the best of luck in the future.

## FROM THE DESK UP

From the design desk, that is. The project with which we were acquainted on Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> Sept really is a ground up, or design desk-up, one, being designed from first principles by the owner-builder, Tony Hanson. And it's no small one, either. The vessel is 40' (12.2m) of luxurious cruising yacht with no real concessions made to racing, although it won't be slow, and it's all in ply.

Tony turned up with his off-sider, Alex, a computer projector illustrated talk and a 1:10 scale model with which to fill us in on all the

details. As an engineer and naval engineer, approaching semi-retirement about eight years ago and with CAD design skills at his fingertips, he needed a project and so his "Sailfar 40" was born. The boat's basic dimensions are 40' x 11'3" x 5'6", the relatively narrow beam being chosen so that it can be legally road transported without an escort. Furthermore, that relatively shallow draft (useful in confined waters) is increased when the yacht heels due to its "Australia II" type delta wing keel.

Several things make this cruiser stand out from the rest, and they all make sense.

Firstly, it has almost excessive freeboard (5'10" at the bow). Tony says he's tired of sailing wet. This will be a dry boat. It will still have 5" of leeward freeboard amidships when heeled to 25 degrees. The stability is also enhanced considerably. The unballasted hull, without the cabin superstructure, should be self-righting up to a knock-down angle of 124 degrees. Add ballast of 39% and the buoyancy of a cabin and it should withstand any conditions, anywhere.

Secondly, the almost all sheet ply construction is interesting. She's skinned in sheet after sheet of 18mm ply, despite being theoretically round bilged. This has been achieved with a very firm turn of bilge separating sides and bottom which are almost everywhere simple curves, not compound. Needless to say, such a shape doesn't have much flair in the topsides. They are almost vertical at midships. If you wanted to be critical, you'd call it boxy, but it looks fine in the model. The bilge area is very compound curved, of course. This area was cold-moulded in three layers of 6mm ply, no doubt using a lot of epoxy glue, after the sides and bottom had been laid. A router was used to cut out stepped shelves in the relevant edges of the 18mm ply so that the three layers of 6mm were properly keyed to the side and bottom panels.

Thirdly, the height of the saloon cabin is such that it gives the yacht the appearance of a motor sailer. The foot of the mainsail has to be a bit higher but so what? It allows 6'6" headroom in the saloon, despite its raised floor, while the generally generous freeboard of the main hull gives 6'3" headroom elsewhere and allows oval port lights in the main hull fore and aft of the saloon. That's comfort for up to six people. As a further concession to comfort, Tony has built in the cockpit a high backrest at the right angle to ensure well supported seating for long periods of time. Two helms, one in the cockpit and one in the saloon allow the helmsman flexibility. The transom is cut away for a

step-through facility to make swimming from the stern easy as well.

She'll have 14m of mast supporting 64 sq. metres of sail in a fairly high aspect sailplan while a 65hp motor should allow her to motor at at least 10 knots, possibly as much as 13.8 knots. Tankage is 600 litres of each of fuel and water – enough to go a long way.

Tony had quite a few pictures of progress so far, from the early building jig up to the present, almost complete and painted stage. The building moulds or frames are all permanently built into the hull and are spaced to provide locations for such internal fitments as the head, bathroom, hanging spaces, galley, etc. All the frames were cut out by computer-controlled high pressure water jet by a firm in Canning Vale for the very reasonable sum of \$1500. It certainly beats hand cutting with a jig saw. The only down side was the need to wash all the cut edges clear of the abrasive which is sprayed with the water. Laser cutting was also an option. Timbers mainly used have been hoop pine ply and Fijian grown mahogany and a tropical hardwood, makoré. The 75mm square hull stringers were laminated up from, I think, Oregon.

The canoe-body was built upside down, fibreglass sheathed and painted, then lifted onto a wheeled frame (I think it weighed about 3 tonnes at this stage), wheeled out of the rented factory in Lansdale and rolled over by a properly equipped crane in slings before being pushed back into the shed. Tony started the build in November '04 and now has a hull almost finished and ready for launching although the fin keel has still to be made or cast. He's built it to survey so that it can be used for commercial chartering and this has meant an inspection from the Dept. of Transport about every month but the result is a super strong boat that should last for decades. Working about four days per week, Tony estimates he's put in 15,000 hours, only 8,000 of which have been on design and construction – the other 7,000 have gone on running around! I can understand this, with the long distances to be driven from one industrial area to the next, teeing up materials

and services and sourcing information. Furthermore, small boats can be built in the convenience of one's own backyard but at 40' one does need other premises, usually.

All in all it was a very comprehensive talk illustrating how high-tech it's possible to go with traditional (well, plywood, anyway) materials. Many thanks, Tony and Alex.

## RETURN TO MAYLANDS

Saturday, Oct 10 saw us back at Maylands Slipway for our second visit in about eighteen months. The weather wasn't too flash; it drizzled a bit off and on but that didn't deter an excellent attendance on the day. Was it my reminder Email? Or the call of Peter and Paul's sausage sizzle? The latter, I think. Despite the occasional light rain, Pete got the barbecue going under the partial shelter of willow trees down by the water rather than trying to crib space under the roof of the main shed, while the rest of us wandered where our fancy took us around the various boats in a wide range of condition.



There are completed and almost completed boats moored along the foreshore; then at least a dozen serious projects approaching completion under cover of the main shed (paying about \$300 per month) then oodles of boats around the yard in various stages of completion/restoration, at lesser rents.



Of the boats out in the open, a few have tent-type annexes over them, such as Paul and

Rosemary Naylor's Van der Stadt Dogger; some have very complete tarpaulins signifying a good degree of love and care while some have badly frayed and torn tarps signifying little attendance from the owners and some have no covers at all. Of the latter, some are complete and water tight as they are – others are too far gone or too large for it to be a proposition.

Of the materials in evidence – just about everything. Two ferro-cement boats, several steel yachts, at least one large, new launch in aluminium, quite a lot of fibreglass and everywhere traditional old, timber planked boats awaiting TLC. There are quite a few ply boats, too. In the last category I eventually found what was almost certainly a boat I built in Geraldton in 1976. She's a Van der Stadt "Zeeton" – a 24', masthead rigged Quarter tonner in multi-chine 9mm ply. She was the same as the MB24 except that the MB was round bilged in 'glass for factory production and quite a popular design on the river for a while. Sadly, my old boat is in the torn tarp category and will probably receive chainsaw attention rather than a good resto. Some of the 'glass sheathing is peeling off and there's a large hole in the bottom – a pity.



One less-than-usual vessel was a small proa being scratch built under a tarp shelter. A proa is a Polynesian idea with one large hull (always to leeward) and one small. It usually sails in one direction on one tack and in the other direction on the opposite tack, so everything has to be reversible. The idea has

great potential for high speed record attempts and “Crossbow II” is an example of this. However the Maylands sample seems to be intended for cruising by one person, going on the fully sealed accommodation capsule which made up the windward hull. A tallish wing mast lay nearby.



Most of the planked boats are launches in varying stages of decay and are usually fairly old. Some need planks, or portions of planks, replacing and many have rot at the transom and sometimes at the stem, too. Where the plank problems have been rectified they are generally at a re-caulking stage before attempting a complete internal refit. It would seem that restoration is a much bigger challenge than building from scratch, although having said that, I wouldn't want to build a traditional planked boat from scratch unless it was a dinghy, either. (readers should note the email in Admin Notes from Bill Lavery re; his part completed, planked 36 footer)

Sometimes it's necessary during restoration to correct original building faults. Rosemary and Paul have this problem with their Dogger-class yacht. Only a small problem but almost impossible to overcome without removing the bottom skin! It seems the limber holes, which allow bilge water to drain between the frames, are much too shallow and block up all the time, either with paint or debris. Rosemary's trying to drill them out with hole saws but there's no room to get a drill in direct, and right-angle attachments keep burning out. She's almost desperate

enough to remove portions of the bottom skin which is otherwise pristine. Apparently there may be one or two industrial, sidewinder drills which may take the punishment, but at what cost?

Alan and Molly Coy's two boats were there too – “Seafarer”, the 30' old launch we saw four years or so ago, and the 1940's racing hydroplane which was originally saved from destruction in Nedlands by Ross Shardlow. It seems that both boats may currently belong to the Slipway manager, Arno. The good news is that Jay Niven was showing quite an interest in the hydro and if he gets hold of it the grass won't grow under his feet when he gets started. (Late note: the hydro now appears to be in private hands and negotiations have not so far been successful)



Ed Essers & Klaus Sussenbach

Despite the gloomy weather in the open, and despite the gloomy condition of some of the boats, we all enjoyed ourselves around the barbecue under the riverbank trees, which provided just enough shelter against the drizzle. Pete made an excellent mine host, cooking nice large barbecue sausages to perfection, with onions as well and at least two kinds of sauce, plus cold cans in an esky. Peter Leggatt also had the association afternoon tea things on hand so we had everything we needed to be comfortable and sociable. All this was thanks to the two Peters and Paul – much appreciated.

## ADMINISTRATION NOTES

### ABBA COMMITTEE

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### TECHNICAL MEETING

Wednesday, November 25 will see us addressed by David Lugg from the Dept of Transport on the subject of registering new one-off power boats, a problem which Jay came up against about a year ago. With safety in mind, the powers that be have tightened the rules a fair bit in recent times and now require many boats to be extensively tested before licensing, so David's talk will be welcome. He told us, some years ago, of his experiences with foil-borne designs in 14' dinghies – a totally different topic where safety is the last thing in mind! That's Nov 25 at S of PYC Committee Room, 7.30 for 8 pm, earlier if you want to eat there.

### TOOLBOX VISIT

We're still with old boats this month, but on a different scale. Despite the lack of feedback to my Email query (got one, thanks Clive), Paul agrees we should go ahead with a visit to the MV Perth at Henderson where the old ferry awaits restoration. She's in the private hands of Mike Beanland who's forming a company to arrange a way of preserving the old, double-ended vessel, because it's too big a job for one person. I'm sure many members will have fond memories of the Perth (originally SS Perth, her steam engine resides

in the MM) and this could be a very poignant visit.

To find her, approach via Quill Way from Cockburn or Russel Rds, 2<sup>nd</sup> right off Quill then T-road left into Clarence Beach Rd and follow this to the shoreward end of the breakwater, where the ferry is moored. It's just south of Austal Ships. Paul is suggesting another sausage sizzle – it's the Xmas month this time. Sounds good to me, even if we didn't have an excuse for the October one. Can we think of a reason for February while we're at it? Valentine's Day? Seriously, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2pm – 4pm.

### OPEN DAY

Ron Lindsay is holding an Open Day for interested people to view progress on "Kiewa" to date. (we saw her a few months ago) at 23 Honey St (off Caporn St), Mariginiup on November 21. We're invited between 9am and noon. Should be interesting.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE

Members are reminded that their membership fees are due. They remain at \$20 (\$30 for hard copy newsletter) and are payable to the Treasurer, Chris Davis, 5 Johnson St, Wembley 6014

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## PROJECT AVAILABLE

We received the following email and photos quite recently from Bill Lavery. It seems he's not well enough to continue, a real pity. The boat appears to be ready for internal fitout.

His email says:

Due to health reasons I am unable to continue with finishing the work required on my yacht Piet Hein. The Yacht is a Ken Walker design, 36 feet long, 10 feet beam and 5' 6" draft, fast cruiser.

I wonder if it would be possible for you to include the opportunity in the next tool box day communication.

Kind Regards,  
Bill Lavery



Bill's email is [Jennifer.lavery@three.com.au](mailto:Jennifer.lavery@three.com.au) and his telephones are 9419 6830 and 0411 609 869.



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