	<p>RATLINES – FEBRUARY 2025</p> <p>The official newsletter of the Wooden Boat Association of Cairns, Inc. ABN 56 194 994 249</p>
---	---

Membership Update

Thank you to everyone who renewed their membership in response to the reminder in last month's *Ratlines*. We now have 28 members, as well as a recent new membership inquiry.

In This Edition.....

Richard's *SCOOP*

Roger's *Bitaki Taari*

Mark's Rooftop Sailer

Bill's Rock River Skiff

Heritage tool donation

Lake Tinaroo Outing – *Mishaps and Misadventures*

Joule's Trailer Challenge

The Big Move

New Life Jacket Rules

Reconstructing Anglo-Saxon Maritime History



Last month's mystery object:
Blacksmith's Swaging Block



High tides and rainbows at the clubhouse in February

Richard's SCOOP

Chris reports in the Scoop Project.....

Due to the up-tempo timeline now in place for the Big Move, Scoop's build time must be accelerated. So, Richard, Tom & I will now be on the job Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays, with a possibility of homework as well.

In the past month she was released from the building jig and has had the laminated stringers installed on the upper side of the structural deck. These will be where the longitudinal bulkheads of the cockpit area will attach from the bow to the transom.



The transom timber has been cut to length and machined down to 150 mm X 30 mm thickness and will soon be joined to make the full-width strength member.

Also, the first lamination for the inner side of the starboard hull has been laid on the underside of the deck. Quite a tricky manoeuvre. This was cold moulded into position by three old codgers climbing over each other and wielding clamps, packers and glue whilst muttering about age, arthritis, people getting in the way, and laughing all the way through the task. It's great when we can just get on with the job and have fun while doing so. That's what we're all about, fun -the wooden boats are an added pleasure.

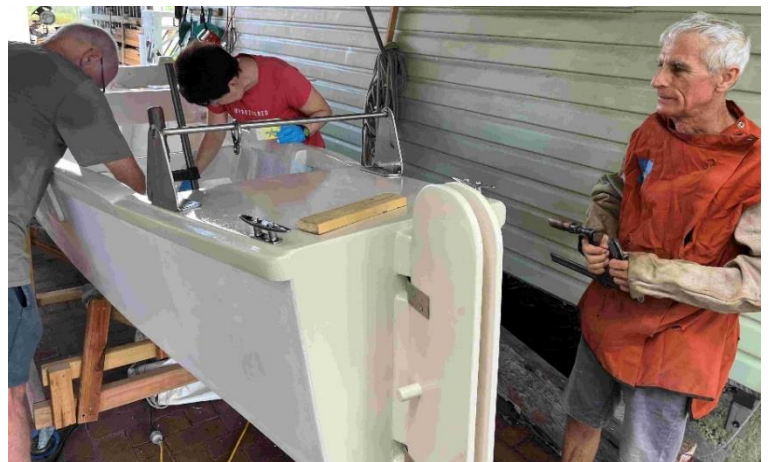


Roger reports on his *Bitaki Taari*.

The team of Roger, Keven, Sheila, Glen and Brian have made good progress over the past few weeks.

The foredeck and gunwales have been painted and the hatches etc. are now installed on the foredeck.

The mast is finished, and boom and gaff have had their final coats of varnish. The stainless-steel horse for the main sheet has been made by Keven and is being polished by Tom (who else!).



The sails and rigging have been ordered.

The inside of the hull has been painted at least twice (feels like a lot more!!), and the floor panels are finished and ready to be re-installed. The seats have been sanded and are ready for painting, again!



Lots of final coat painting to do, but much easier now with the change in the weather.

Mark reports on his emerging Rooftop Sailer

At the January very small gathering of two members at Lake Tinaroo, I took a scale model of my latest project to show Dermot. It's a small, almost flat-bottomed sailboat, 4.2m in length with a beam of 1.4m, made of 6mm plywood and timber.



The nearest thing to what I've designed is the OZ Goose. There's lots of info on this, simple to build, Australian design by Michael Storer.

I could have built an OZ Goose, but I think it needs to be a bit bigger for my size and weight. The other factor driving the modifications is that Michael's design does look very much like a large fruit box with a sail. Mine resembles a house slipper with a sail.



There are two full length watertight chambers that provide roughly 800 litres of reserve buoyancy, making it unsinkable. These also form 250mm wide seats on either side. Another seat amid ships houses the daggerboard case.

A single lug sail, hung from a box-section mast stood well forward in the boat for easy rigging. And that's about it.

At this point, I'm scaling up from the model to mark out the floor and walls of the hull. The plan is to stitch-and-glue the panels together (a technique I haven't tried before).

In the pursuit of a low cost build, I saw Bunnings had "marine ply" 6mm for \$70 a sheet. In this case, I think they're referring to the bonding, not the veneer.

It took two and a half weeks to get three sheets (in stock) from Smithfield to Atherton.

In the meantime, I built the mast, boom, yard, centreboard, rudder and the transom. Bow sections are cut out but not assembled.



Chris reports on Bill's Rocks River Skiff.

Bill is a local businessman and grandfather who has had a project in mind that is finally coming to fruition. A man with an eye for detail, fastidious in his craftsmanship and a significant amount of sawdust in his blood, Bill has combined two goals that we can all understand:

1. Build the wooden boat of his dreams
2. Take his grandchildren for a ride on his boat

The boat is the David Payne designed 'Rocks River Skiff' for either clinker or strip-plank construction, LOA of 4.7 metres and a Beam of 1.2 metres. Bill says about his search for details on the design:

"Plans were hard to find. Although listed at Boatcraft Pacific they had no stock. I finally tracked down a set of plans through Sydney Wooden Boat School. One of the members recalled seeing a set squirreled away somewhere and managed to dig them out for me."

I don't know how old the design is. I tried to track down David Payne, but he has gone to ground, possibly literally."

Further updates as they come to hand. In the meantime, several of our members have expressed a desire to move into his workshop, and you'll see why in the photos.



Donation of Heritage Woodworking Tools



Our club was fortunate this month to receive a donation of heritage woodworking tools from Andi Cairns, a mutual friend of Roger and Dermot, who recently moved with her husband, Will, from Townsville to the Tablelands. The tools belonged to her cabinet-maker father as she explains in the following account of her father's woodworking life:

Ernest Harold Ricketts (known as Harold) was born in 1917 and died in 2013, aged 96. Harold's father James returned at the start of the First World War after only two weeks in France, having lost a leg in an explosion. Harold was the second of four boys born during the war years – life wasn't easy for the Ricketts family. Harold's teachers recommended that he apply to go to the local Grammar School, but his father was out of work so couldn't afford the fees. Besides, with three other brothers, times were hard in the Great Depression (1929–1939).

Harold left school in his early teens and did his apprenticeship as a cabinet maker in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, England. In those days High Wycombe was the centre of furniture-making in England, originally started in the beech woods of the surrounding Chiltern Hills in the early eighteenth century.



I recall my father saying he had to make all his tools in those days. Sadly, few of those early tools remain. I do remember him saying that he gave many of those to a young apprentice just starting out.

Dad joined the Army in 1939 at the start of WWII and was assigned to the Royal Corps of Signals. He served in India as a morse-code specialist and at the end of the war was demobbed and returned to High Wycombe. He took a job in the local telephone exchange and married his supervisor in 1949.

He later returned to his career as a cabinet maker. Times had changed; tools were no longer hand-made! He worked for various smaller furniture factories in High Wycombe, eventually ending up with Ercol Furniture (www.ercol.com). He was always meticulous in what he did and had great attention to detail...so he progressed to Quality Control. He said fellow cabinet makers would be upset when he sent articles back – but that was his job (and his nature says Will!).

When he retired, he said he never wanted to touch another piece of wood again, but lovingly cared for the pieces of Ercol Furniture that he and my mother owned.

They migrated to Australia in 1983 and joined us in Townsville. He would have been delighted to know that his old tools have found new homes!

Chris took charge of Harold's cherished tools and within a few days reported that:



All the planes supplied have been cleaned, de-rusted, blades re-ground and sharpened, as have all the hand mortice chisels ('hand' because they're meant to be used by hand for paring away mortice joins without using a mallet on them).

There were some real rarities amongst them, and I'd like to assure Andi that they will definitely be used and put in pride of place!

Thanks Andi!

Thanks Harold!

Thanks Chris!

Mishaps and misadventures

Tradition has it that Thursdays are the lucky day to go to the lake, but the latest outing may just disprove that! Promised a beautiful day by Dermot, Thursday 27 February started grey and drizzly. (Scotch mist to those from the northern Isles). Phill reckoned it rained all the way up the Gillies range, though those from the north side were luckier, Kuranda was dry.

Roger had a late start, made later by trailer light problems, then having to get fuel on the way and a chat with someone at the servo, who wanted to ask about the boat. At Mareeba, his driving reverie was broken by Phill's phone call, asking politely, "Where are you?"

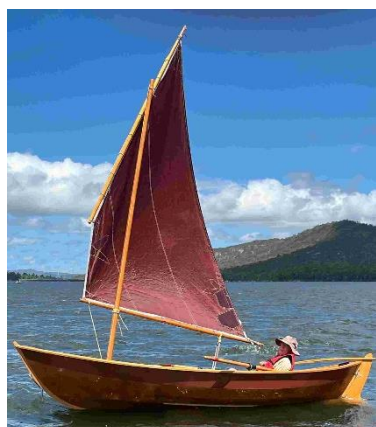


With *Iona* and Tom a no-show, and everyone else except Glen already there, Roger had to forego morning coffee and cake, and get *Brahminy* in the water and a fire lit, while the rest sat around and relaxed! Dermot advised all and sundry that Kauri Creek was the objective for lunch and promised

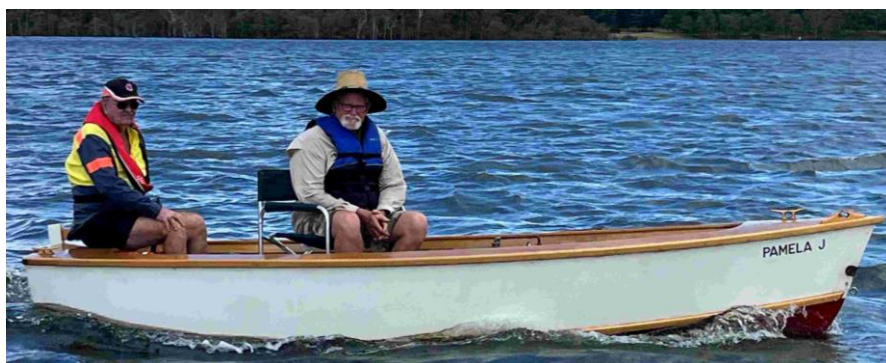
Joule would play sheepdog to the mob! Keven decided to sign on as crew on *Joule*, remarking prophetically, "You might need a hand if anyone needs rescuing".



The calm before the mishaps



Sufficiently caffeinated, Richard set off in *Ninanji* into a brisk and erratic breeze.



Phill had his putt-putt *Pamela J* running well, and with Mark on board set off in pursuit of Richard.



John W joined Roger in *Brahminy* for a much more sedate ride.



Glen set out in *Flatty* under outboard power, having decided that sailing was a bit dodgy in the blustery conditions. Wise man is Glen!!

Roger had an early shake-up, when he discovered that the steam engine's pump was not delivering water into the boiler. This was the first of several operator errors, and turning "on" the valve that feeds water to the pump resolved the problem. Phew!! Engine chuffing quite happily now, with John W steering a course across the lake, *Brahminy* rocked and rolled in the short chop. Looking back, Glen was rapidly catching up with Dermot and Kevin in *Joule* in hot pursuit.

A sudden engine stop and a cloud of steam, announced the next problem with *Brahminy*, a steam gland had come undone. This was quickly screwed back into place, and she chuffed back to life. This was another item that Roger had forgotten to secure properly after having had the engine out – more operator error!!

While *Brahminy* had temporarily stopped, *Joule* turned up to assist - luckily not required. Then the peace was disturbed by Dermot's shout, "Richard is over". Sure enough, there was no red sail where *Ninanj* had been. While momentarily looking astern to check on the other boats, a sudden strong gust had caught Richard by surprise and *Ninanj* had capsized. The sail was lying flat on the water and the hull was completely swamped.



Joule "raced" to the rescue (i.e. at 5.5 electric-powered knots), rapidly followed by Glen. His little boat is remarkably quick and stable in those conditions. *Brahminy* followed more slowly, but was in time to see that Richard was OK, and that *Joule* had taken *Ninanj* in tow - conditions being unsuitable to right the boat in mid-lake. While all the rest were happy just to hang on to a rocking boat, Glen was standing upright taking photos! You can't keep a good man down!

Getting a sodden Richard on board *Joule* was quite a challenge, requiring him to stand on *Joule*'s outboard motor trim plate, followed by one knee on *Joule*'s small transom board and collective arm-hauling by Keven and Dermot. Fortunately, Richard is a semi-aquatic mammal and was not unduly perturbed by his unplanned dunking. He declared that the water was pleasantly warm and refused the offer of a towel or blanket.

Unnoticed at the time, Richard's foot pressure on the trim plate had slightly tilted the outboard (attached to the transom only by clamps), which in turn prevented the steering arm from sliding when turning to starboard – a consequence only discovered later in the cascading drama.

Meanwhile, the stricken *Ninanj* was slowly dispensing various items of unsecured cargo across the lake surface – Richard's hat, paddle, bailer, several hatch-covers and a 20-litre plastic container of water ballast. Glen recovered the paddle and hat, while Dermot shouted and waved in Roger's direction asking him to retrieve the barely floating water container. Over the thumping of the steam engine and the roar of the wind, Roger didn't hear the request to pick up

the container, cheerfully waved back, and John W pointed *Brahminy* in the direction of Kauri Creek, leaving Dermot, Kevin and Glen to get Richard and *Ninanji* onto shore.

Soon after, *Pamela J* turned up at what appeared to be 50knots. They had got to Kauri Creek, guessed that something was holding up the fleet and returned. Realising that we were not all going to get to Kauri Creek before lunch, Phill suggested that lunch back at base was a better idea. Roger agreed, so *Pamela J* and *Brahminy* headed towards the Sailing Club.

With Richard now on *Joule* and heading for the nearest shore – making slow progress with the drag of the water-filled *Ninanji* in tow. Meanwhile, Glen was already near the shore to refuel his outboard, which has a small built-in fuel tank that needed several top-ups during the morning because of the extra load on the engine in the windy and choppy conditions.

Then a large dinghy with three people on board arrived at the scene at high speed, having watched the maritime incident unfold from a distance. With their stronger engine, they took over towing duties and brought *Ninjanj* close to shore in no time. However, the “shore” proved to be an illusion. What looked like a sandy beach from a distance turned out to be a ribbon of dead grass floating at the edge of the submerged forest – the level of the lake being over the dam spillway at the time.



In the calm water near the “shore”, Richard jumped overboard and promptly disappeared. He eventually resurfaced, beamed reassuringly and began swimming towards his horizontal, water-filled boat. Keven then dived overboard to join the mission to right and empty *Ninanji*, assisted by the youthful skipper of the dinghy, who was probably doubtful that a band of ancient mariners could manage the resurrection of *Ninanji* on their own.



While this was going on, *Joule* was drifting ever closer to the floating long grass, and Dermot’s attempts to steer the boat back to deeper water revealed, too late, that steering to starboard was no longer an option. *Joule* was soon surrounded by floating grass, making it impossible to use the motor in any direction, and with only one person on board, Dermot’s attempts at paddling only resulted in the boat going in unproductive circles. But never fear – the ever-vigilant Glen was not far away, and he quickly arrived to tow *Joule* back to the safety of clear water.

Still chuffing along, Roger and John noticed that Phill and Mark in *Pamela J* were stationary! Going over to enquire why, it was apparent that the engine was not running. A tow rope was passed over and *Brahminy* (now even slower), gave tow.

Phill meantime was working on the engine and soon, putt-putt-putt was heard. Great!. Tow line was retrieved, Phill and Mark shot past in the direction of the sailing club. A few minutes later, silence! *Brahminy* caught up again, tow rope passed and the tow began again. Phill went back to work.

By this time *Brahminy* and *Pamela J* were out of the worst of the chop, and putt-putt-putt was heard again. The tow rope was retrieved after a few minutes, to make sure all was well, and *Pamela J* and *Brahminy* finally made their way to shore in time for lunch. With no sign of *Joule*, *Ninjani* or *Flatty*, Roger rang Dermot to make sure all was well and was informed that they were all on their way back. Soon the boats could be seen making a slow return, *Joule* with *Ninjani* in tow, Keven and Richard in *Ninjani* to act as living ballast! Richard's suggestion that he could return under sail had been vetoed by the rescue crew!



Glen, as always, does his own thing, and little *Flatty* reappeared shortly after, safe and sound.

It turned out that the problem with *Pamela J* was that Phill had overfilled it with oil. In the chop, with the boat rolling, too much oil was being splashed onto the bore and the spark plug was oiling up!! Operator error!

Lunch was a relatively sedate affair with everyone grateful that all had turned out well. Richard's loss of *Ninjani*'s cargo was a reminder to us all that loose items need to be attached to the boat.

With *Ninjani*'s 20-litre water ballast container, still floating around the lake, Dermot and Roger took *Joule* out to search for it, Dermot taking care to avoid the need for starboard turns. Midway through the search, *Joule*'s motor stopped suddenly for no apparent reason. Switching to the second battery got things running again and the search resumed without finding the container.

The mystery of the motor stoppage was solved the following day when Dermot discovered a melted Anderson plug on one of the battery leads. The plug was rated at 120 amps, far above the 20 to 40 amps usually used for powering *Joule*. Dermot's conclusion is that the meltdown likely occurred when attempting to switch the solar power charge from one battery to the other but momentarily connecting the two batteries together instead. The result of distraction amid the maelstrom of mishaps and a battery switching design that should have been modified to prevent the overload. Operator error again. (I've lost count!!)

Enough for one day. Boats were loaded onto trailers with only one more mishap – Dermot sat on his sunnies when he got into his car!

All made it home safely and slept well that night. It was an eventful day!

Roger and Dermot 4 March 2025



Dermot reports on solving *Joule's* Trailer Challenge

Astute readers will remember my offer of an unspecified reward to enable *Joule* to be floated onto her trailer without having to strain the winch to pull her dry weight over all the trailer rollers. Phill and Brendon are both in contention for the award for their suggestions that led to the trials described below.

When floating *Joule* onto the trailer, it's easy to ensure that her bow rests on the front trailer roller which is clearly visible, but difficult to make sure the aft end of the keel aligns perfectly with the back roller, which is out of sight and underwater.

I've workshopped this issue with Phill many times over the last couple of years, and his persistent response has been, "There must be something simple you can add to the back of the trailer to align the keel". Until now, my response has been that anything that protrudes higher than the back roller to align the keel, will prevent the bow of the boat from running smoothly over the back roller as it begins its journey along the trailer.

Fortunately, Phill continued to ignore my reasoning and continued to urge me to come up with the "something simple" solution. Finally, it dawned on me that when the trailer is immersed in the water for floating the boat on, the bow will float well above the back roller so that "something simple" protruding above the roller won't hinder the bow's progress.

That realisation led to the installation of two flexible trailer sliders, mounted on edge at each side of the back roller. Something simple – thanks Phill!



Meanwhile, Brendon suggested using a mechanic's inspection camera to look under the boat to check the alignment of the keel on the roller. The world of inspection cameras was new to me, but I soon discovered that SuperCheap Auto sells inspection cameras with a 1-metre-long semi-flexible cable attached to a hand-held battery-powered screen for \$150.

Then an online search came up with a waterproof camera on a 5 metre semi-rigid cable that plugs into an iPhone for \$49. Sold! This camera is 8mm in diameter, including 8 adjustable LED lights, and the 5 metre cable is sufficient to run through a conduit from the front of the trailer near the winch to just in front of the back roller.



Both systems have potential, and the combination could be the answer. I'm still getting the hang of juggling the phone and the winch at the same time, while nudging the boat left or right, but the first trials at the lake were very promising.

The Big Move

Roger reports - Suddenly it is upon us!

Following a very cordial meeting that Chris and I had with the representatives of Ports North and their design team, I am able to report that our preferred layout of an open-sided shed and separate clubhouse, that we presented to them some months ago, has been accepted and will be the basis for the design. They have also agreed to provide power to the clubhouse and the shed.

We have applied for a grant to do the electrical installation of the shed. If that is successful, then we will have power points at multiple locations, lighting and fans.

The schedule for the move has been brought forward and we now must be ready to move out at the end of April/early May. Exact dates to be determined.

There is considerable work required to prepare the clubhouse and containers for the move, so we will be asking members for assistance over the next few weeks.

And to briefly distract us from the logistics of moving, Chris has encountered this conceptually challenging design for a circular power boat?



New Life Jacket Rules in Queensland

From December 2024 new regulations in Queensland make wearing a lifejacket mandatory when:

- Boating alone or only with children under 12 years on an open boat less than 4.8m in length whilst underway
- Crossing designated coastal bars on an open ship and on an open area of a boat of any length and on certain craft
- Children one year or more and under 12 years are on an open boat or an open area of a boat of any length whilst underway
- Nighttime boating, between sunset and sunrise on an open boat less than 4.8m in length whilst underway



While these new regulations are now in effect, they will not be enforced until July 2025 to allow time for boaties to be updated on their responsibilities.

More information is available at <https://www.msq.qld.gov.au/about-us/news-and-stories/new-rules-for-wearing-lifejackets>



Despite our recent mishaps and misadventures, we have a good record of making sure everyone in an open boat is wearing a life jacket during our Lake Tinaroo outings, so the new regulations should not impact us.



Reconstructing Anglo-Saxon Maritime History

Chris provided this account of an historic wooden boat build in the UK.....

SUTTON HOO SHIP REPLICA SET TO SAIL THE SEAS

A team of dedicated volunteers is working to complete a full-scale reconstruction of the famous Anglo-Saxon ship discovered at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk. The Sutton Hoo Ship's Company (SHSC) has been using traditional 7th-century techniques - without modern tools - to build the 90-foot-long vessel, now over halfway complete.

Once finished, the team has ambitious plans to sail the ship, first mastering the tricky currents of the River Deben before navigating stronger waters. Their ultimate goal? A journey up the Thames to Tower Bridge and, in time, even a daring voyage across the English Channel to Holland or Denmark.

The project, estimated to cost £1.5 million, honours the craftsmanship of the Anglo-Saxons. Volunteers have been splitting wood by hand and shaping it with axes, just as shipbuilders would have done in King Rædwald's time.

This incredible re-creation offers a glimpse into Britain's early medieval past and could soon be making history on the open seas. What a sight that will be!

Further information at <https://saxonship.org/the-project/>



Ladies and Gents, this concludes *Ratlines* for February 2025 and, as always, if there's more you want to see or know about, please contact us by return email. Likewise, if you have a story or article you'd like included please send it to us at wbacairns@gmail.com

Clubhouse: 68 Tingira Street, Portsmith, (Cairns) Qld 4870

Committee is: President- Roger Fryer;
Vice President- Chris O'Keefe (WBAC Facebook page);
Secretary- Dermot Smyth (Librarian & Ratlines);
Treasurer- Brendon O'Rourke;
Committee- Tom Sparks, Sheila Sparks (website supervisor),
Keven Muller, and Richard Heazlewood.

Email address: WBACairns@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.woodenboatscairns.com.au>

Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/Wooden-Boat-Association-of-Cairns-118900728480121/>

Postal Address: 68 Tingira Street, Portsmith, (Cairns) Qld 4870

Phone: 0417 266 555 (Roger)

WBAC's Cash For Containers number is: C10026463