

ST AYLES SKIFFS OVERSEAS AND LOCAL!



by Robert Ayliffe

New Zealand First International Raid and Regatta, Geelong
Wooden Boat Festival and new Anzac builds and launchings.

The first big St Ayles Skiff regatta was held north of Auckland, at Army Bay, about one and a half hours drive north of Auckland, over the annual Treaty Of Waitangi (February 6,7,8) holiday weekend. I was privileged to be there, along with a substantial contingent of Australians, especially Tasmanians, Scots and Zealanders.

My wife, Ali unfortunately for me, had to stay with long time friends in Auckland; I went on up to Army Bay, and settled quickly into the wonderful comfortable Shakespear YMCA Lodge.

Pretty soon I found our Tasmanian friends who had arrived in numbers, and the Scottish veterans and new faces who had not only returned to the southern hemisphere, really contributed to the Kiwi event, and the energetic and enthusiastic Kiwis many of whom I already knew from Hobart in February 2015 and the spectacular inaugural Southern Hemisphere Skiffie Worlds in Franklin, Tasmania a week later. (*Australian Amateur Boatbuilder/Kitboats* issue 90)

On the gorgeous beach just down from our YMCA lodge were four of the fabulously built Kiwi boats;

there had been six for the big open water 'raid' that preceded the regatta, but unfortunately they could not be there for the weekend.

Local numbers were down a bit on the weekend's expectations, though there had been very good numbers on the raid.

Like so many events at this time of the year, there was a lot of competition for attention, after all, the Treaty of Waitangi celebrations were in full swing up and down the country.

It was for me a great learning weekend.

The intensity of the community that had formed, the Kiwi hospitality, the stunning setting, the competition and the warm water were a heady mix.

There were several take outs for me.

The first was confirmation that it really is important to engage with community, in the way that the Franklin Living Boat Trust and Women On Water (WOW) succeeded in doing. Theirs was a deliberate bottom up program, with their community initiating and completing the build, and the resulting frequency of use of their boats is testament to that.



The same goes for Warnambool, and their Stroke recovery link with community.

The WA Royal Freshwater Bay Boat Club, and the WA Naval cadets are approaching it in a more closed organisational community, but the basic community build, community use concept is similar.

Very few of the boats have been built outside of this formula. When the community build is intended and strong, so is the community 'ownership' and engagement after the build.

The Scots and the Irish builds have all been along these lines, empowering and connecting their communities.

The second take out was how fabulously the skiffs performed in open water. The Sunday was very wet

TOP LEFT: St Ayles Skiffs on the start line in the land of the kiwi.

TOP RIGHT: Close in racing is great for crowds.

ABOVE: Skiffs on the beach, Army Bay.



LEFT: At 180kg the skiffs are light, but many hands make launching even easier.

BELOW LEFT: Stern first launching, in surf.



The organisers of the Royal Geelong wooden boat festival have really lifted their festival. A big PR exercise in starting in Hobart last year has helped, along with strong personal follow up from that festival deserves a massive lift in public attendance, industry sponsorship and wooden boat community participation. There will be come and try events each day across a range of boats, especially the St Ayles fleet.

and a bit wild once we got out past the headlands. A few minutes in the rough stuff and the initial fears of some of our number were completely allayed. The St Ayles Skiffs are not only beautiful, but they really are at home in the elements, especially when the going gets rough.

Iain Oughtred is an inspired designer.

And finally there is the beauty of the boats.

Beautiful. There are not many human artefacts that you'd put into this seascape imagining that their presence might improve the view.

The sight of the this fleet, on the beach, and on the water, and driving off the beach and out to the open water is the exception.

In four weeks time we have the first 'Big Island' regatta in Geelong. Ali and I will be towing the Armfield Slip built *John Liddy* across, on her bright new custom trailer. At least one skiff will be coming from the Warnambool Stroke Recovery crew, Rev. Jim Barr's and his Welsh Church's Skiff, *Cariad*, making two from Victoria, two more from Tasmania, and, amazingly John Longley and Steve Ward, the two drivers and builders of the *Australia 2* project, who are now the drivers and builders of the WA St Ayles program, from The Royal Freshwater Boat Club in Fremantle, are making the pilgrimage across the Nullarbor with *Dotsie*, the first of their two new boats, in tow.

Another two are in build by the WA Naval Cadets, at Rockingham.

Several Norwalk Islands Sharpies are expected, along with two Mk2 kit builds, the Rob Ballard built NIS23 Mk2, *Route 66* and Adrian Galindo's new NIS 26 Mk 2, *Electra*.

The next, and the biggest St Ayles world regatta yet, is coming up in Strangford, Ireland in late July. Over 100 boats from around the world and 3000 rowers are expected. The StrayDog crew are booked! Many others from across Australia and NZ will be with us.

We expect to be away for four weeks, racing in the regatta, and enjoying the world wide community of the St Ayles Rowing movement including another regatta in Scotland a week later and, just maybe, a bit of a break.

MORE BUILDING!

The eighth skiff kit to go out in Australia has just been launched, another four are building in addition to that one.

BREAKING NEWS!

The first NSW community to come on board looks like being the Lake Macquarie Classic Boat Association Inc. What a great venue, and at last the skiffs will be building in our most populous state.

New skiffs are about to be built on another Australian Island.

This time, it's Kangaroo Island.

The prospect of the skiffs on Kangaroo Island has prompted the realisation of a long desired community workshop in Kingscote, under the banner of the



On the raid, early February, New Zealand.



The first two Western Australian boats, Royal Freshwater Bay Boat Club.

Men's Shed movement. It's hoped that while the initial impetus comes from the skiffs, the shed will provide a resource for the wider community, and especially those wanting to become more broadly engaged.

The community that builds a boat builds a community.

The boats, once built will become a community asset, attracting use by groups of people of all ages and backgrounds, coming together in common purpose, in building and on the sea.

It is intended that up to five St Ayles skiffs from around Australia will be joining with the first Kangaroo Island St Ayles skiff, to row in company from, first Kingscote to Penneshaw, and then Penneshaw across the wild backstairs passage to Cape Jervis,

as a curtain raiser for the revamped 2017 South Australian Wooden Boat Festival in April, 2017.

RECOMMENDED VIEWING:

Google, You Tube
staylesskiff.net
 'St Ayles Skiff Time Lapse Video'



For more info contact:

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