



RATLINES – AUGUST 2026

The official newsletter of the Wooden Boat Association of Cairns, Inc.

ABN 56 194 994 249

Current Membership: 37: AGM & Christmas Lunch: Sat. 12th December Tinaroo Sailing Club
Membership enquiries and renewals contact Richard at wbacairns@gmail.com

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Clubhouse Redevelopment

Last Saturday, concrete footings were made for the awning structure and the handrails for the steps into the clubhouse.



Men at work! Women not required.



Tom, Yen & Warwick (Yen's friend) prepared the side of the clubhouse for painting.

FAREWELL SANDY DOG

Chris reflects on the recent loss of Sandy, our unofficial club mascot.



Sandy was a rescue dog who, after a bad start to life, was taken in to Sheila and Tom's home where she found her Shangri La. Lots of love, walks, adventures, good food and treats, but she never lost her trim figure. Not even during her twice-weekly visits to our clubhouse, where she managed to sucker and guilt-stare our members out of biscuits, cake, savoury rolls and so forth.

Of course she knew all the soft-touches who she could follow around until they relented and gave her that dog biscuit she knew was in your pocket (me), and no matter how many she consumed she was always up for more. Wish I knew her secret to staying slim!

Sandy had many adventures, loved rolling in mud, but her most significant was being given a whoopie cookie by one of the itinerant campers that was overnighing in the boat ramp nearby. Her weird reaction caused a trip to the Vet..... but as always she took it in her stride. Not thunder storms, however, they made her try to dig through mattresses to find safety.

Sandy was a loveable cross between an Irish Wolfhound and perhaps a couple of other bloodlines, and she made it to 14 years of age before she crossed the rainbow bridge.

Loved by all she met, Sandy will be sorely missed, especially here at WBAC.

Roger's Raid Reflections

Anticipating plenty to do, four of us decided to get to the Raid early (on the Wednesday), when things are quiet and it is easy to get a perfect camp site. So, when my driving reverie was broken with a panic phone call from Phill, the first to arrive, announcing that the campsite was full of people, it sparked a touch of anxiety.

Sure enough, there were at least 40 people and 20 tents at the Sailing Club ground. However, anxiety was eased with a short talk to the teachers from Smithfield High, who assured us all would be clear by 12 noon. We did not even have to mention Tom's threat to run naked across the grounds to scare them away. Enough to frighten anyone!



12 noon arrived and the grounds were clear (apart from a healthy supply of firewood, thanks to the students), so the first tents were set and lunch eaten. Boats were set up on the foreshore, and the 2026 Great Tinaroo Raid had begun.

Tom, Sheila, Phill and I were joined around the campfire by Ken and Penny from Bramston Beach. They had just purchased the 16ft Hartley trailer sailer advertised in the July edition of *Ratlines*. They soon became part of the team—and potential members.



Thursday was damp and drizzly, but the grounds filled with people, tents, cars and trailers. Boats were launched, but the emphasis was on staying dry and helping tents to be erected and campsites set up.

The double-Seagull-engined boat, *Silver Gull*, was joined in the middle, the leak sealed with Sikaflex and the extensive controls connected by bits of string. As the performance of the boat was unknown, I got the short straw to drive it. Sensibly, I decided to defer the experience for another day!



For me, the sight of a family of Great Crested Grebes feeding just offshore and an imperious Greater Egret stalking the shoreline were enough to make the day worthwhile.



Keven and I took *Bitaki* out for a sail in the afternoon when the wind had dropped a bit, and we had a nice sail out, but the wind got up and we had a wild ride back, with the lee amas underwater (perhaps a reef would have been a good idea!). By nightfall, the grounds were full of people and with ample supplies of firewood the campfire was again the centre for tall tales, red wine and genial conversation.



Friday was a day of race preparation, and anticipation. The Sarus Cranes had been making their daily commute from Yungaburra to "who knows where" every morning and back in the afternoon, so breakfast was interrupted to take some pictures of these magnificent birds honking their way overhead. Always worth a look and a smile.



Silver Gull was again left alone, while I had a short paddle in the Canadian Canoe, *Heron*, and took *Bitaki* out a couple of times. The afternoon was supposed to be a gathering with the “Friday Afternoon Gentlemen Sailors” (FAGS), but I opted for an afternoon snooze, followed by leisurely sail in *Bitaki*.

Saturday was Race Day. Up early for final preparations and to start the twin motors of *Silver Gull* for a trial run which showed that both would start on demand, so back to *Bitaki* to convert her to electric power.

Borrowing an electric outboard from Dermot was easy, and, with the battery and outboard connected and crew (Sheila) aboard we did a quick trial run, only to be called back to tow *Joule* as the electrons on her were playing up. With *Joule* in tow, we started for the shore, only for Dermot to announce that he had managed to get the motor going. Suffering electrons! Was this a cunning plan to reduce our battery power or a genuine problem? Dermot says it only happens at the Raid!!!!??



Herding cats is easier than getting WBAC race participants in one place, but eventually all those involved gathered for the words of wisdom. Marc was designated starter, ‘cos I’d forgotten we needed one, and with the TSC safety boat out of action, Mark volunteered *Zigzag* with Richard on board to act as a starting boat and to follow the mob around the course.

Sheila had painted new start signs, Amber for wait and Green for go. This proved a bit complicated to explain, but eventually, amid the chaos, it was assumed that all had understood this. Marc was to do the timing on the shore and Richard to mirror his signals from the boat. This actually worked well, and proved to be the best coordinated start(s) we have managed.

Once underway, it became apparent that I could not steer and handle the electric outboard at the same time. *Bitaki* now has a steering wheel, but because of the position, it is not intuitive which way to turn. Sheila had to learn the hard way, so our course was a little zigzaggy and we had to slow down to avoid running over Luis and Keven simultaneously (one on each side!).

The outboard had a tendency to twist itself into a sideways position and trimarans do not go well sideways, so this had to be fixed. Then it decided it didn’t like the boat and tried to leap off. Luckily, I grabbed it before it succeeded, but this caused a rather long halt to proceedings while I reattached it. By this time we were well and truly behind the field and because of the twice-around rule for 48-volt motors we were supposed to go round the course again!! Could not see this happening.

Sheila had the steering more or less sorted by this time and with me keeping the motor pointing in the right direction, we started to gain on the rest of the field. We managed to cross the finish line the first time, just behind Peter Higgins but concern over lack of electrons meant I decided to not go round again and we came home well and truly last!! A DNF.

The electric race was won by John Williams in his eponymous Scruffy, *Jaydubbya*, with Glen as ballast in the bow, pushed along nicely by a 24-volt motor. Luis came a second in a poly kayak equipped with a stick to meet “wooden boat” criteria. Keven came third in the white canoe, followed by Dermot and Yen in *Joule*—severely handicapped by the two-circuits rule, not to mention taking an unnecessary detour during the first circuit.



Concern for my body and state of mind, meant I did not enter the Paddling Race, but offered *Heron* to anyone who wanted to participate. Yen and John Breen took up the offer. The starting system was working well, and with a good start, they showed everyone else a clean pair of paddles, coming home first in great style.



Luis gets the prize for the most enthusiastic paddler.



I reckoned I deserved a manufacturers trophy, but was shouted down!!

Discretion was definitely the better part of valour for the Rowing Race. Not helped as I had no oars nor a boat! With two keen competitors with a combined age of nearly 170, this was an impressive spectacle. Peter Rountree came home first in his long, ama-equipped skiff, and Glen put in a gallant effort in his *Flatty* for second place.



The impromptu race committee, (whoever happened to be there at the time!), decided to bring the Seagull race forward to 1pm, so lunch was declared early.



Post-lunch resonated with the Seagulls' raucous call. The race was deferred while *Tippy's* motor was repaired and started. With the rest of the fleet ready, *Silver Gull's* double motors roared into life, while extra hands held the boat back until I was all set to go—this was to avoid Phill being mowed down by an ama after starting the forward motor as happened during trials the previous week.

At extreme pace, but very little steerage, I managed to get behind the line and began to circle back to it. This involved a round trip via Mackay, Cairns and Mareeba (at least it felt that way!), but finally heading back in the right direction I noticed the amber sign, AHHA, I thought, by the time I reach the line it must change to GREEN. Silly to think that. With no means of slowing down without stopping an engine, I crossed the line with Marc still holding an Amber. !!!!@!!??? . What the*****!!



Circumnavigating the world, I returned behind the line to start about half an hour behind every one else!! Still, all was not lost, accelerating to warp speed I sped around the first corner, catching the field, then disaster—the front motor cut out. The fuel tap had turned itself off. Obviously sabotage!! On one engine, with a dragging propeller, *Silver Gull* was still fast, but not fast enough and for the second time that day I finished last!!

Sheila again came in first in *Tippy*, though the mighty Seagull responsible for victory gave out after crossing the finish line, so Sheila had to paddle back to shore.



An official protest to the starter, and the promise to cut of his wine supply, met with little support. His complicated mathematical formula deducting time spent with only one engine, still meant I finished last! Enough said.

Luckily, a glorious afternoon sail finished the day, and when Bill arrived with a dozen cans of Guinness, all was well with the world again.

Sunday as usual, involved some casual boating, loading boats, packing up camp and heading home. With Marc to help it was one of the easier packing up days and we were saying our goodbyes and away by lunchtime. Another fun few days of the Raid completed. Being there for an extra day really helps with getting settled and ready to enjoy the Race Day!





RAID RACE RESULTS

Electric-powered Race

- 1st: John Williams and Glen Jaydubbya
- 2nd: Luis in *Poly Blue*
- 3rd: Keven in *White Kayak*
- 4th: Dermot and Yen in *Joule*
- 5th Roger and Sheila in *Bikaki Taari*

Paddling Race

- 1st: John Breen and Yen in *Heron*
- 2nd: Luis in *Poly Bue*
- 3rd: Peter Higgins in *White Streak*
- 4th: Keven in *White Kayak*
- 5th: Peter Rountree in *Skiff*

Rowing Race

- 1st: Peter Rountree
- 2nd: Glen

Seagull Race

- 1st: Sheila
- 2nd: Peter Rountree
- 3rd: Peter Higgins
- DNF: Roger

Tent & Wardrobe Malfunctions

Sheila reflects on a Friday afternoon tranquility-shattering explosion and Tom's wardrobe malfunction.

Much muttering was heard: was it a gas canister or even a fire arm? No it was our exploding "inflatable tent". Standing close to the action I knew exactly what had happened as our temporary home was well and truly deflated.



Never fear, the rescue team flew into action: Kevin, Louis and Tom set about re-erecting the deflated tent, years of nautical, aeronautical and "camping on a budget" experience was brought to the fore. Guy ropes, tent poles "borrowed" from near by tents and rope were efficiently put to use and in no time the crumpled mess of fabric became more like a tent again.

Word got out to Dermot and his first comment was "get some pictures". You know who your friends are in times of need!



Tom on a rope

Another near disaster was avoided: Tom forgot his belt to hold up his jeans. Like any man of his age, a piece of rope was all that was needed to fix the problem. Unfortunately for him Roger spotted the calamity. The picture says it all!



Mark's Memorable Moments

A few thoughts from Mark Heaton on the raiding wooden boat enthusiasts' gathering at Lake Tinaroo.



I was apprehensive about the weather as I towed my little sailing dinghy to the lake on Thursday morning. Tableland drizzle, overcast conditions with showers were the flavour of the day. It was blowing its backside off to boot.

All that changed as the weekend progressed. To the point where Sunday felt like a positively sublime spring day.

For me, the stand-out moments were, catching up with fellow boaties, spending time on the water and the crisp, clean sound of Phill's nicely tuned putt-putt motor.

I had a clear image in my head of a 'fifties family in a simple boat, making their way down the Mulgrave River for a fishing weekend at Russell Heads. Thanks Phill!!

Thanks also, to everyone who made the effort. I had a great time.



***Stellar* Performance**

Everyone who attended this year's Raid enjoyed the sight of the cutter, *Stellar*, cruising Lake Tinaroo elegantly dressed in a full set of sails under the command of Ronald Glen.

With her gaff-rigged main, twin headsails, flying jib and topsail, *Stellar* put on a captivating performance of sailing elegance throughout the weekend.



Stellar was built by Ron and his brother Peter in Coffs Harbour and launched in 2000.

The hull was constructed using cold-moulded plywood, each thin layer of ply bonded together with epoxy resin.



The boat is based on a design by Howard Chapele (1901–1975), an acclaimed American naval architect who published many books on maritime history and boat design, including *American Small Sailing Craft* in 1951.

Ron acknowledged that it's quite a challenge to hoist and manage the full set of sails single-handed, with so many lines to control. With an auxilliary diesel available when required, *Stellar* can keep cruising when the wind drops away.

Thanks Ron for putting on such a show for everyone over the Raid weekend!

PROJECT SCOOP

Chris updates progress.....

Scoop's port gunwale forward laminating is complete, and the final sections will be fitted & glued in this week. The inner gunwale will be fitted as well.



The template for her starboard side plywood hull sheeting has been marked and should be in use this coming week.

CHINA BOUND

Sanding on *China Bound* continues. Luis gave *China Bound* a second coat of undercoat last week, but further painting has been held up again by the rain.

A Sunbird family has made its nest on the cage of one of the work area fans next to *China Bound*. The fan has been decommissioned until the new residents depart.



ROCK RIVER SKIFF

Bill's Rock River Skiff is looking super sleek with her final coat of poly U-400 sprayed on.



Hartley 16 Appraisal

New WBAC member Martin Rhodes brought in his recently acquired Hartey 16 trailer sailer, *Windsong*, for appraisal by Chris and other usual suspects. *Windsong* was built in Brisbane in 1974 and has had several previous owners on the Tablelands.



Chris reported that she's well built, neat and tidy and well kept. The condition of her hull and deck is very good, but her transom is absolutely shot with rot and needs replacement.



All is not lost however because Chris doesn't believe the rot has travelled into the hull and gunwales. It's a fiddly repair that will take a little time, but also an interesting job for the club to undertake.

The Hartley could be moved into a work bay once *China Bound* departs (which shouldn't be that far away).



New Dawn for Old Solar

WBAC's old solar panels, which used to provide power at our previous club site across the road, have begun a new life charging power tool batteries for the Yungaburra Landcare Group.



The panels were donated last year and have recently been installed on a purpose-built charging station (definitely not a shed—that would have required Council approval!) at Peterson Creek.

The Landcare Group is very grateful for this donation, especially since there is no electric supply to their work site, which means that batteries currently have to be lugged back and forth for charging at home.

Inspired by the design used for Cazaly's carpark in Cairns, the panels form the roof of the charging station, allowing light to penetrate inside the charging station.



The electrical connections are all set up. The Landcare Group is currently waiting for a grant to purchase new storage batteries—the old ones having long passed their use-by date.

BOAT FOR SALE

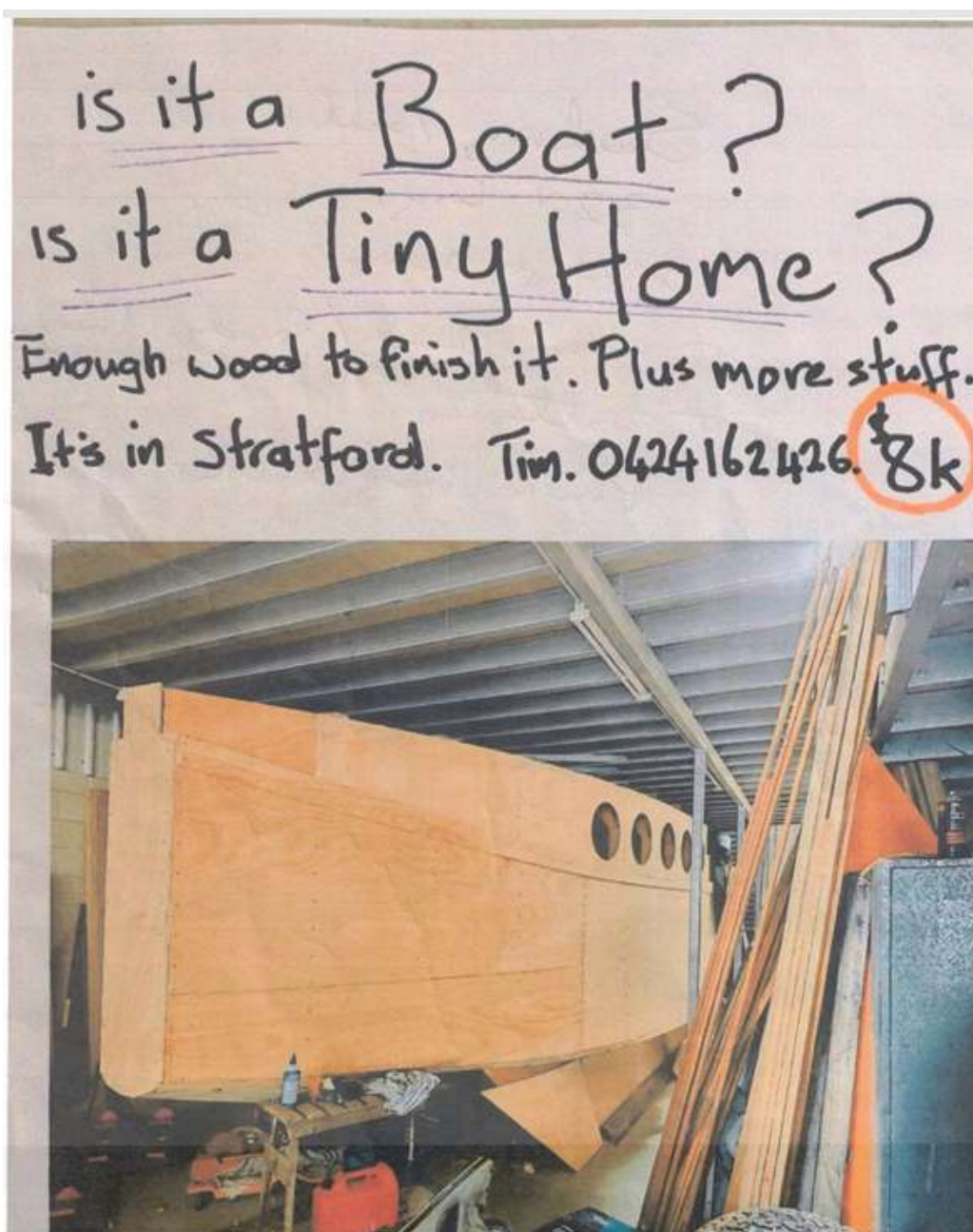
WBAC was handed the For Sale notice below by a visitor to the clubhouse last week.

It is a partly built sailing boat, 32 ft x 10 ft, has solar panels, fridge freezer and batteries but no rigging.

Based on a George Buehler design (www.georgebuehler.com).

Price is highly negotiable

Contact Tim on 0424162426



Ladies and Gents, this concludes *Ratlines* for August 2026 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: 6 MSQ Access Road, Portsmith, (Cairns) Qld 4870

Committee:

President- Roger Fryer;

Vice President- Chris O'Keefe (WBAC Facebook page);

Secretary- Dermot Smyth (Librarian & *Ratlines*);

Treasurer- Brendon O'Rourke;

Committee- Tom Sparks, Keven Muller, Richard Heazlewood and Bill Miles

Websites Supervisor: Sheila Sparks

Email address: WBACairns@gmail.com

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

Facebook:

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

Address: 6 MSQ Access Road, Portsmith, (Cairns) Qld 4870

Phone: _____ 0417 266 555 (Roger)

WBAC's Cash For Containers number is: C10026463