



## **RATLINES – DECEMBER 2025**

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

ABN 56 194 994 249

Membership Update: 34 members

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## **CLUBHOUSE REDEVELOPMENT**

Tom has been heroically sanding and painting the clubhouse, often in the blistering sun.

Tom's rainbow-endorsed efforts are greatly appreciated.

Thanks Tom!



## PROJECT SCOOP

Richard reports on recent progress

Being AWOL because of seasonal family stuff, three of the club's ancient mariners (Chris, Glen and Keven) have continued the build with the bottom of one hull now being covered in marine ply.

Thanks to the attention to the fiddley bits getting everything square, the ply on one side is almost a mirror image of the other side, which bought a great deal of satisfaction to our designer, Chris.

The boat is about 50% completed and everything appears to be coming together as per the plan. I look forward to rejoining the team in the New Year.





## MEKONG ALOFT

As reported in the October 2025 edition of *Ratlines*, Chris's beautiful *Mekong* was completed a couple of months ago.



She has yet to take to the water and is currently snugly secured to a ceiling at Chris's place.



Maybe she'll take out line honours at next year's Raid Rowing Race.

## AGM and CHRISTMAS LUNCH

In a break from tradition, the Committee decided to hold the Annual General Meeting and Christmas Lunch at Tinaroo Sailing Club this year. The venue worked well, the weather was brilliant; the catering was excellent and the feedback from those who attended has been very positive.



At the AGM the following Committee was appointed: Roger Fryer (President), Chris O'Keefe (Vice President) Dermot Smyth (Secretary), Brendon O'Rourke (Treasurer), Richard Heazlewood (Membership Secretary), Tom Sparks, Keven Muller and Bill Miles, while Sheila Sparks retains her role as Website Supervisor.

After the AGM, the fundraising auction, managed in style by hustling duo Roger Fryer and John Williams brought in over \$600 in revenue for the club. Many thanks to everyone who donated items for the auction and to the buyers who snapped up the bargains on offer.



Special guests at the lunch were Tinaroo Sailing Club Commodore (Roger Waldley) and Membership Secretary (Annette Wadley). It was a valuable opportunity for them to get to know our club and members, and they generously donated a TSC towel for the auction.



After lunch, Roger Fryer presented the 2025 Great Tinaroo Raid race trophies, as well as trophies for best boat at the Raid and the year's most valuable member.



**Electric Propulsion Race winner:  
Glen Chisholm**



**Paddling Race winner:  
Roger Fryer**



**Seagull Race winner:  
Sheila Sparks**



**Best Boat at Raid 2025:  
Roger Fryer's *Bitaki Taari***



**Most Valuable Member 2025:  
Keven Muller**

Peter Rountree was not present to accept his trophy for winning the Raid Rowing Race.

## HARTLEYS AT LARGE

Lake Tinaroo outing Thursday 18 December

Last Thursday we had our final “mucking around in wooden boats” outing for 2025 to welcome two Hartley 16ft trailer sailers to the club’s fleet.



New member Rex Hitchison and his friend Niels brought along the recently refurbished *Sacre Bleu*, which Rex first launched at Lake Tinaroo a few months ago.

Dermot and Christina arrived with 40-year-old *Whileaway*, which they had unexpectedly acquired a few days earlier from Tinaroo local Jim McAlister, who turned up to pass on some rigging tips.

Christina was the driving force for the acquisition, having confessed to missing the joy and drama of real sailing as a passenger on Dermot’s electric-powered *Joule* – a latent sailor’s yearning that Dermot had failed to detect, smitten as he was by electrons and solar panels. Or perhaps Christina’s coded messaging was too obscure even for a sensitive new-age Irishman. Either way, it was the first time Dermot didn’t have to lobby for a boat purchase!



Joining the Hartley-fest were John Breen, who had previously sailed and worked on *Whileaway*, Mark who brought along *Zig Zag*, and Richard with *Ninanjii*.

John helped Christina and Dermot raise the mast on *Whileaway*, then joined Rex and Niels for a pre-coffee cruise on *Sacre Bleu*, while *Zig Zag* rapidly became a white dot on the far side of the lake, and Richard tackled the blustery conditions in *Ninanjii*.



Richard recounts his adventures in Ninanji:

*While Jim and John helped Christina and Dermot rig Whileaway for the first time, I slipped away for a sail to the other side of the Lake. With my usual agility, I jumped aboard my very unstable small craft without falling into the water and took off into a stiff breeze and headed for the far shore.*

*The wind was quite strong but gusty, with sudden bursts of breeze designed to tip me over, so it was not a relaxing sail, with a lot of attention required spilling the wind from the sail to keep the boat upright.*

*The water was quite choppy which, coupled with the gusty wind, made going about very difficult and eventually I had to accept "the boat was not for turning".*

*So we headed for the shore to get a little protection and managed a reasonably controlled jibe, then headed off at great speed until a change of direction was heralded by a loud thump as the boom swung across to set a wobbly exciting sail pushed by strong breeze behind the boat and a safe quick return to the sailing club to find Dermot and Christina had successfully rigged their boat and everyone gathered for customary coffee and cake.*



Sufficiently caffeinated, Christina and Dermot headed out for their first voyage on *Whileaway*, with the mainsail cautiously reefed and Christina at the helm.

The little vessel (and the skipper) performed beautifully, handling the gusty breeze and occasional white caps with ease.

As one of the very first trailer sailers in the world in the 1950s, the Hartley 16 design has proved popular over the decades, with hundreds still sailing in Australia, New Zealand (their country of origin) and elsewhere.





Somewhat chastened by his earlier outing, Richard opted to join Rex, Niels and John on *Sacre Bleu* for their second run of the morning – showing the capability of Hartley 16s to still perform well with four people on board.



Meanwhile, Mark resumed his zigzagging dash from one side of the lake to the other, seen here closing in on *Sacre Bleu*.



With no maritime incidents to report, the only minor hiccup of the day occurred on land when Mark's ute became bogged in the soft sand while attempting to tow his boat and trailer out of the water. As always, the finely honed WBAC rescue team was on hand to quickly redeem the situation, and everyone packed up and headed home after another memorable lake outing – one of many in 2025.



## AUXILLIARY FINS

Chris has thoughtfully shared this alternative propulsion option:



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Ladies and Gents, this concludes *Ratlines* for December 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](mailto:wbacairns@gmail.com)

Clubhouse: 6 MSQ Access Road, 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.

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WBAC's Cash For Containers number is: C10026463