A Bloke and his boat – *our regular feature about one of our members..*

This month is another of our tablelands members – Dr. Tom. And here, **in Tom's own words,** is his story about how wooden boats became a part of his life:

I consider that Cairns is a beach at the end of the line. In the sense of the railway line, this is literally true and also of the road line, the Bruce Highway. If life is a beach, Cairns attracts the flotsam and jetsam of humanity that wash up onto "The Beach at the End of the Line", and I am no exception. Born in England and brought up in Central Africa, we migrated to Cairns in 1965. My parents had enjoyed "messing about in boats" on the rivers in England and wanted to instill that same love into their children.

My brother Tony and I sailed a Gwen 12 sailing dinghy at the Cairns Yacht Club on Trinity Inlet. My parents sailed a Heron, which had been beautifully built for them by Sydney Bolton, who also built and sailed the 16-foot skiffs that epitomised dinghy sailing all over Queensland in the 60's and 70's. I remember sailing as fast as possible up Trinity Inlet in the Gwen, me on the trapeze, Tony at the helm, and still going backwards because of the outgoing tide!

In my late teens, I built my first boat, an Australian Scow Moth. It was from a kit, put together with resorcinol glue, which did not waterproof the seams adequately, or perhaps I was too "stingy" with the amount of glue. Initially, it leaked like a sieve until I did some reparative work!

My second boat was built during the university holidays. Also from a kit, it was a Contender sailing dinghy designed by the Australian Ben Lexcen, he of America's Cup fame. This boat was more successful, but after that, my mother put her foot down. She had had enough glue and paint droppings on the concrete under our high set Queenslander-style house and told me that the next boat I built would be at my own house! However, I decided to stick with what I knew I could do and leave boat building to those who were good at it!

I moved back to Cairns in 1990 when cyclone Joy was lashing the coast, after a time of working in England, Sydney and then in the late 80's, in Mackay. Whilst in Mackay, I had been involved in the Mackay Sailing Club where my two sons learnt to sail in Sabot dinghies.

A chance meeting in the early 90's with Bob Goodall at his plywood shop on the corner of Lyons and Hartley Streets (where "Tutt Bryant Hire" now lives) lead to a long friendship. He started the Wooden Boat Association together with Rob Sperling "Kiwi", Steve Jarret and Dale Murray. I had read about the "raids" in Europe and Scotland, which are organised, competitive trips along rivers held over several days. They are a rather similar concept to a car rally. I realise that a similar event could be a focus for

the newly formed Wooden Boat Association, and suggested a Tinaroo raid. It wasn't a trip from point A to point B, rather a camperthon at Tinaroo Sailing Club. It was a great success for 10 years until it was rained out at Barrabadeen in 2014.

I would like to acknowledge and pay tribute to the Wooden Boat affectionados and builders in our area. **Grainger Morris** is or was a canoe builder extraordinaire based in Kuranda. **Peter Jones** restored one of the Gwen 12's, which I possess and I am lucky enough to have one of his "smile" canoes built from dacron over huon pine ribs. **Mark Boutle**, RIP. He was a wonderful local chiropractor from Innisfail who died some years ago. I have a beautiful sailing dinghy of his. Mark's mentor Brian was a local fisherman in Innisfail who taught Mark how to build wooden boats.

I always think of the phrase *"A thing of beauty is a joy forever"* when I see a beautifully made wooden boat. I am a firm believer that wooden boats are great for the mental health, if not so great for the wallet or the endless upkeep they demand! **..Tom..**

The following pics are from Mark Boutle's build of the sailing dinghy: