



RATLINES – SEPTEMBER 2026

Official Newsletter of the Wooden Boat Association of Cairns, Inc.

ABN 56 194 994 249

Current Membership: 46: AGM & Christmas Lunch: Sat. 12th December Tinaroo Sailing Club
 Membership enquiries and renewals contact Richard at wbacairns@gmail.com

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(No lake outing to report this month)	



Clubhouse Redevelopment

Work continues in preparation for the installation of the clubhouse awnings.

Occupational Health and Safety protocols are maintained at all times!

Note *China Bound's* recently fibreglassed mast in the foreground.



PROJECT SCOOP

Richard reflects on the journey and the looming destination.....



It has been two years since Chris did the initial drawing for the design of Scoop following a discussion around the club coffee table about building a wooden version of a small inflatable craft suitable for zooming around the Lake. Now, we are tackling the final plywood sheeting of the hull.

There have been many modifications to the design and lots a different building experiences on the way with a huge learning curve for the Trades Assistant under Chris's watchful eye and involvement of many other old blokes, especially Tom and Glen.

I will personally find it a sad day when we finally finish. There have been some very challenging personal ups and downs over the 2-year period, and the build has acted as a welcome distraction to some of these challenges.

The latest pictures show the finished frames, stringers and gunnels with a few of the joints being redone because of a wobble in the gunnel, which is now dead straight and level.



Also shown is a technique to engender memory into the ply sheeting around the bow to accommodate the curve using tie-downs and ratchets to complete the curve prior to screwing and gluing. We thought it was a brilliant case of 'necessity breeds innovation' and are quite proud of how it turned out.



Fitting of the final sheeting is underway after much fiddling around with templates and fine planning work to get an exact fit.



A trailer for Scoop

Please contact Richard @ wbacairns@gmail.com if you have, or know someone who has, a small trailer suitable for Scoop.

To which Chris adds.....

Finally, we've reached one of the major checkpoints on *SCOOP*'s build plan - if we had one, that is!!

Her entire framework is complete! The last inboard gunwale is finished, and we will soon sacrifice something to the boat gods for looking kindly upon us.

At the same time we were glueing the gun'l into place, Richard and I also glued the Gadagi trim onto the top of the transom handrails. These handrails will extend right to the bow along the outboard gun'ls only, and will also act as keeper rails for any upholstered seats that may be added.

Soon we'll do the final fairing of the port and starboard topsides (sides, really), and then we will get stuck into the last of the plywood works. Then the "pretty work": two-tone handrails as above and across the lip of the bow; hatches for the hull storage compartments; fuel tank stowage; and so on.

Still much to do, but such an enjoyable project we're happy for it to go along as far as it needs to go!

Last Saturday

Starboard ply topsides were glued and screwed very successfully. Same template used for the port side with minimal adjustments. Should be installed next Saturday with some fairing of frames.



CHINA BOUND

Chris has also been keeping an eye on China Bound's progress

CHINA BOUND continues with sanding of her uppers, and also her mast has now been double wrapped with epoxy and glass tape to give it extra reinforcement.

The glass tape was spiral wound onto the epoxy-wetted mast while it was spun slowly on the rotisserie, and more epoxy applied with brushes to make sure it was fully saturated while keeping tension on the tape.

A bit of an awkward job to do, but as soon as the team got into a rhythm it went like clockwork. Pun intended (you know, turning shaft, hands on, time sensitive, etc.)



ROCK RIVER SKIFF

Bill celebrates the soft launch and first lake trials of his sleek new rowing skiff

With the building and painting completed, I loaded the skiff onto the trailer and relocated to Tinaroo for final fit-out and adjustment.



The trial launch went well but revealed trailer setup adjustment is required to sort out some minor problems.

A quick solo row on the lake confirmed that the performance of the design was up to expectations and no disasters were likely, before returning to shore for embarkment of enthusiastic passengers.



The boat handles well with three adults and is reasonably stable.

Prototype oars have inboard length that requires rowing with hand crossover action.

This works well, but is difficult when the boat is out of balance due to lots of movement from boys playing with fishing lines etc. I may have to consider two sets of oars of differing inboard lengths.

I am really pleased with the boat, but less so with the fishing, with one catfish being the only catch so far.



RESTORING BT's SOGGY AMAS

Roger explains the steps required to restore Bataki Taari's amas from soggy to buoyancy

During the Raid I had noticed that some of the paint on the inside of the starboard amas was bubbling. Bursting one bubble with a fingernail revealed water under the paint. The inside was wet!

Opening the drain plug allowed a little water to escape, but there was a bigger problem to solve. A couple of days after the raid the problem ama was loaded onto the roof of the car and taken home.

Once there, investigation of the inside, via the 150mm hatch in the top, found that the flotation material that completely filled the amas was damp. This material has a spongy consistency and was never going to dry out. So, it had to be removed, one 140mm square at a time. Cut up by reaching inside the ama with a carving knife, it was surprising how much flotation material there was!!

Now able to look inside, it was obvious that the plywood hull was damp, and had never been properly sealed. A small fan and an incandescent light inside provided a warm breeze and started the drying out process.

Another trip to the lake was now needed to get the other ama back home and give it the same treatment.

Reasonably sure that the water ingress was due to poorly fitting hatch covers, I checked the surrounds of the covers and found cracks. Removing these, I was surprised at how brittle they were. New ones were needed and a better seal installed under the surrounds.

Removing the hatch covers did some damage to the paintwork, so now the tops of both amas needed repainting! This involved removing all the cords that hold the pivot points to the amas. A small job was getting bigger!

10 days later, I decided that the plywood had dried sufficiently to start repainting. Luckily the plywood was still sound on both amas and the paint on the port ama was fine, so I only had to sand back the inner side of the starboard one. Taking this back to bare wood where the bubbles were revealed that this plywood was still solid. Good!

To seal the inside of the amas, I mixed up two-pack epoxy sealer, and used the washing nozzle on the air compressor to spray as far as I could reach inside. Twice to be sure, to be sure!! The inside of the amas seemed to develop a satisfactory mist of sealer. Once dry, I was satisfied that everything I could see was sealed. I also sealed the bare timber patches on the outside of the hull before undercoating.



At enormous expense, I bought some proper, closed cell flotation foam, that again had to be cut into 140mm squares to get in through the hatches. Plastic garbage bags (the super strong ones!) were pushed into the amas and filled with foam blocks. The bags were then sealed and pushed (gently), towards the ends of the amas. I managed to get five bags, providing about 50 kilos of floatation, into each ama. The idea is that any water entering the amas will run off the plastic and into the “bilge” where it can be vented via the drain, and that the bags will dry out faster when the hatch is opened to air out the inside.

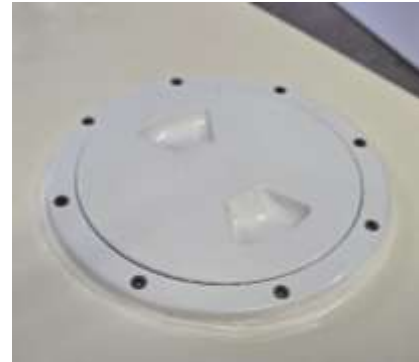
Having used up all the topside paint when we finished rebuilding *Bitaki*, I now had to try to colour match it. The original was a one-off mix, and I had lost the specifications, so had to ask Wattyl to try to match it. This took a couple of tries. In the meantime, I repainted the side of the hull and the red “go-faster” stripe.





Once all was painted, I spent a happy morning retying all the “cats cradles”, which attach the amas to the cross beams. For once, I thought ahead and had taken some pictures before I untied them.

The new hatch covers were fitted onto 6mm thick rubber foam sealed with Sikaflex and screwed down carefully to keep them as even as possible. With a home-made tool to tighten them properly, I’m hopeful I have solved the water entry problem. No more soggy amas!



Ready to go!

Ladies and Gents, this concludes *Ratlines* for September 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

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