



(St Ayles) SKIFFIE NEWS

The adoration of the *Messenger*.

by Robert Ayliffe

The latest St Ayles Skiff, 'Fast Messenger', built by the men and women of the Warnambool St Ayles Skiff Club was launched with wonderful ceremony at the brilliant Warnambool Flagstaff Hill Marine precinct last Sunday.

Fast *Messenger*, was first previewed to the public at Portland's impressive Upwelling Festival the day before in brilliant sunshine, and a day of subsequent Whale Boat racing in the bay.

Fast Messenger was accompanied by sister boat from Goolwa, South Australia's *John Liddy*, in the parade and onshore display. The Rev Jim Barr, Welsh Church Melbourne and builders Chris and Alan, met up with us that evening back in Warnambool, in readiness for the big launch day on Sunday.

What a day Sunday was! *John Liddy*, *Cariad* lined up on their trailers with *Fast Messenger* under her drapes, ready for public unveiling and launching. Probably 100 people in attendance, and the superb Warnambool



Fast Messenger goes to water!



Fast Messenger needed little coaxing off her trailer and into her natural environment. She looked resplendent in her new Aquacote livery, stylish professional signage, and 'FAST' outfitted crew!

Flagstaff Hill Marine sheltered lake and marine village setting was perfect for the event.

The next day saw a four boat regatta with *Cariad*, *John Liddy*, the newly launched *Fast Messenger* and Flagstaff Hill's resident 29', five oar Whale boat, *Flagstaff Hill*.

The day saw many first time local rowers jumping into the boats. The rowing times confirmed what we had suspected. The experienced crewed times around the course in *Flagstaff Hill* were matched by scratch crews in the smaller St Ayles Skiffs.

Fast Messenger is the seventh St Ayles Skiff to be launched in Australia, with another six building and another six mooted. There are four building in WA, another in Tasmania, and another one in Warnambool. Four boats are on the water in NZ, and another six are in build.

We expect over 20 St Ayles Skiffs in the water in Australia in time for the March 2017 Wooden Boat Festival in Goolwa.

An Anzac St Ayles Coastal Rowing organisation is slowly but surely becoming a reality.

Events are building.

The Kiwis are having their first international event, an open water coastal raid, from January 1-February 16, 2016. Kiwis. Small country, BIG thinkers! Some Tasmanians are rumoured to be going, the Cygnet mob, possibly with their boat. For more info google nzcoastalrowing

In Australia we will be having our second major event in Geelong, at Royal Geelong Yacht Club in association with their Geelong

caption here?



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Wooden Boat Festival, held over the Labour Day weekend commencing on Saturday, March 12 and running until Monday 14. More info contact Stuart Dickson – phone: 0417 379 860 – email: stuart.dickson47@gmail.com.au website: <http://www.woodenboatfestival.yachting.org.au> (see p36-42 this issue)

The big one is the second 'Skiffie Worlds'; July 25-30, 2016, to be held on Strangford Lough, North Ireland.

For much more info go to:

<http://scottishcoastalrowing.org/2015/06/04/skiffieworlds-25-to-30-july-2016-to-be-held-in-strangford-lough/>

In 2017 the South Australian Wooden Boat Festival are hoping to have a big St Ayles Skiff involvement. It's rumoured that two boats are about to be built on Kangaroo Island, and it's further rumoured that a curtain raiser before the festival might be a contingent of interstate and mainland boats joining the Kangaroo Islanders with their boats in a mass crossing of Backstairs Passage, between Penneshaw and Cape Jervis, as a curtain raiser to the Goolwa Festival.

Info: [woodenboatfestival.com.au](http://www.woodenboatfestival.com.au)

Readers may be interested to know that the project manager and builders involved with the two best known boats in recent Australian history, are among the many great contributors to the St Ayles 'family'. That would be John Longley, who project managed and worked on both boats, and Steve Ward, who

actually built *Australia 2*, and worked for some time on *Endeavour* as well. Fast company indeed.

Both John and Steve became aware of the Skiffie phenomenon while attending the Australian Wooden Boat Festival in February this year. The rest is history!

If you want to see some brilliant video on Youtube relating to St Ayles Skiffs, check this video link out! www.staylesskiff.net Simply Brilliant!

Another two St Ayles Kits have just been ordered by the WA Naval Cadets, and should be in build by the time you read this.

In the last few weeks orders include Tammie Norrie 13'5" to Oliver in Victoria, Badger to Graham in Victoria, another St Ayles kit to the Bitterns rowing group in Franklin, Tasmania, and our new 10m Coorong Aurora kit to Leon in South Australia.

As we travelled through Victoria, trailing *John Liddy* on his brilliant new bright yellow trailer, capable of carrying three St Ayles Skiffs, en route to Warnambool we called in to deliver sails and to visit Ken MacMahon, who had been building the Penny Fee, a much larger and heavier constructed cousin of Guillemot and Tammie Norrie.

Ken had been with me when I demonstrated, with Roi Fuchs, from Marine Timbers, the Aquacote paint techniques we have developed, here in South Australia. The demo was a fraught day, hot wind and leaf litter dust blowing around, and seemingly impending rain. A climate controlled experiment, to be



left: Peter White's Acorn 15 built from one of our complete kits resplendent in Aquacote's shiny Black and UV filtered Clear finish over sanded Bote Cote Epoxy, **below left:** The Royal Freshwater Bay Boat Club boats progress.

sure, especially since the Wemyss Skiff we were painting was outside! It was a tough gig, but Ken was sufficiently inspired to go home and start painting his Penny Fee.



I admit to being stunned when I walked into his workshop. His boat looked simply fabulous, as smooth, shiny, and as perfect as I have ever seen a paint job.

"Dead easy, when you get the hang of it," more or less describes Ken's description of his Aquacote experience. "Just used foam brushes, fast, great coverage and perfect finish."

Ken is a master boat builder, I like to call it, 'self apprenticed', and it shows.

And the final one, Peter Whiten's stunning kit build treatment of Iain Oughtred's sleek, slippery and surprisingly capable Acorn 15 design.



John Liddy on new three boat trailer, *Fast Messenger* on her new one boat trailer at the Portland 'Upwelling' Festival.



Ken with his Penny Fee *Alma J*. Note the brilliant Aquacote finish.

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